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ABSTRACT

The U.S. Senate conducted a hearing consisting of two panels: the first panel discussed overcoming reading difficulties with a primary focus on children and the second panel focused on reading and literacy outreach activities that are ongoing in the U.S. After opening statements of the Hon. James M. Jeffords, the Hon. Edward M. Kennedy, and the Hon. Jack Reed, the transcript includes the texts of oral statements and prepared statements by the following individuals: Blanche Podhajski, Stern Center for Language and Learning; Catherine E. Snow, Committee on the Prevention of Reading Difficulties in Young Children (National Research Council); Reid Lyon, Child Development and Behavior Branch (National Institutes of Health); Perri Klass, Vermont State Colleges; Charles I. Bunting, Department of Pediatrics (Boston Medical Center); Dawnna Lanctot (students) Community College of Vermont; Peggy A. Minnis, D.C. Head Start Toyota Family Literacy Program; Noel C.R. Gunther, WETA Learning Project; and Janet Arnowitz (teacher) Fairfax County Public Schools. An appendix contains a letter to Senator Jeffords from Gwen O'Donnell Graham and a series of articles from the Hartford Courant, by Robert A. Frahm and Rick Green. (RS)

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READING AND LITERACY INITIATIVES

ED 431 180

HEARING

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND HUMAN RESOURCES UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED FIFTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

ON

EXAMINING PROPOSALS TO IMPROVE THE READING AND LITERACY SKILLS OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES, FOCUSING ON S. 1596 AND H.R. 2614, BILLS TO PROVIDE FOR READING EXCELLENCE BY IMPROVING IN-SERVICE INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES FOR TEACHERS WHO TEACH READING, TO STIMULATE THE DEVELOPMENT OF MORE HIGH-QUALITY FAMILY LITERACY PROGRAMS, TO SUPPORT EXTENDED LEARNING-TIME OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHILDREN, AND TO ENSURE THAT CHILDREN CAN READ WELL AND INDEPENDENTLY NOT LATER THAN THIRD GRADE

APRIL 28, 1998

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READING AND LITERACY INITIATIVES

TUESDAY, APRIL 28, 1998

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND HUMAN RESOURCES,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:05 a.m., in room SD–430, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Senator Jeffords (chairman of the committee) presiding.

Present: Senators Jeffords, DeWine, Warner, Kennedy, Dodd, Wellstone, Murray, and Reed.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR JEFFORDS

The CHAIRMAN. The Committee on Labor and Human Resources will come to order.

We have a very interesting morning ahead of us on a very interesting and important subject. Those of you who bought The Washington Post this morning may have seen that there was a feature story on reading on the front page. We have stories which we will be hearing from our witnesses today which are remarkable and exciting, about the potential in the area of ensuring that we have an America that reads.

Last November, the House of Representatives, led by Representative Bill Goodling, Chairman of the House Education and Workforce Committee, passed the Reading Excellence Act, H.R. 2614, which is pending before this committee. A companion bill, S. 1596, has been introduced in the Senate by Senator Paul Coverdell. The purpose of these bills is to improve the reading and literacy skills of children and families, primarily through improving professional development for those who teach reading.

The most recent national survey of reading achievement by fourth-traders, the 1994 National Assessment of Educational Progress, indicates that 44 percent of school children are reading below a basic level of achievement. Unfortunately, these statistics do not improve when looking at the findings from the most recent National Adult Literacy Survey.

This survey found a total of 21 to 23 percent, or 40 to 44 million adults, were at the lowest literacy level. Adults in this category displayed difficulty using reading and writing skills essential for carrying out daily routine activities.

In my own State of Vermont, a State often regarded as a leader in education, there are 80,000 people who are in need of adult education services, and only a small fraction of those 80,000 are participating in adult education activities. This is a staggering number in a State where the population is under 600,000.

There are several federally-funded programs that attempt to address the literacy issue. These include Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which supports instructional activities that help students meet high standards in core subject areas such as reading and math; Even Start, created by my friend, Chairman Bill Goodling, which provides family literacy programs for parents and children; Reading is Fundamental, which promotes the establishment of reading programs, including the distribution of inexpensive books to students; and adult education State grants, which give assistance to educationally disadvantaged adults in developing basic literacy skills.

These programs have a good track record for those whom they have served. However, many individuals are not able to participate in these programs. For example, Title I currently services only two-thirds of those students eligible to receive Title I services; Even Start provides support to about one-fourth of those individuals who could be assisted by participation in the Even Start program; adult education is estimated to serve only one-seventh of the adults who are functionally illiterate.

It is very important that any new reading initiative passed by Congress be closely linked and coordinated with the Federal programs I mentioned in addition to well-established private sector efforts.

Many of us on this panel are involved in a volunteer reading program called Everybody Wins. As a founder of the DC. Everybody Wins Program, I am thrilled at the large number of Senators, congressmen and congressional staff who participate on a weekly basis in reading to students in the DC. schools. Volunteer efforts are important, but they alone will not eradicate our growing illiteracy problem.

Today we will hear from an array of experts on two panels who have hands-on experience in combating illiteracy for all age categories. Our first panel will discuss overcoming reading difficulties with a primary focus on children. I am delighted that Blanche Podhajski, from Vermont's Stern Center for Language and Learning will be presenting testimony that focuses on the Stern Center's program of increasing student literacy skills and emphasizing the importance of professional development in accomplishing this effort.

Our second panel focuses on reading and literacy outreach activities that are ongoing in the community and throughout the Nation. I am especially pleased that Chancellor Charles Bunting from Vermont State Colleges and Dawnna Lanctot, a student from the Community College of Vermont, have joined us this morning to discuss the importance of reading tutors through the College Work-Study Program.

In the recently released National Institute for Literacy report, "The State of Literacy in America," a Mississippi adult literacy student offers this perspective as to why he enrolled in adult education: "Without an education in the year 2000, we the people will be in serious trouble. Because now everything is moving forward fast, and without an education, you will be moving nowhere."

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses as to how we can work to improve the reading levels of our Nation's children and make certain that our fellow citizens will not be in serious trouble.

Before I call the first panel, I would like to call everyone's attention, as I have already done, to the front page of The Washington Post, which highlights the importance of libraries and particularly the important role that the Queens, NY Library plays for immigrants in the Queens area. The library circulates the Nation's highest number of books.

It is important to note that libraries are very critical, and any reading legislation that we move forward must be tied with our library system.

With that, I would turn to my good friend, Senator Kennedy, for his opening statement.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR KENNEDY

Senator KENNEDY. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I want to thank you very much for the strong leadership that you have been providing on literacy issues. You are a leader in many different areas, but I think all of us have understood that you were referencing both the President and Mrs. Clinton, as well as Congressman Goodling and Senator Coverdell, and I think all of us know that this has been something of your strong commitment over a long period of time, and we are grateful now for these hearings.

Today, I think we have an extraordinary group of witnesses who can really point out the path to making an extraordinary contribution to this Nation and moving us forward to becoming a reading community where reading is common among children, even preschool children, common among adults and families, and this is very important.

Young people around the country want to help increase literacy through our work-study programs. In Massachusetts, more than half of all the colleges who are involved in work-study have young people involved in tutoring, and in my opening statement, I mention many of the communities in Massachusetts that are involved in this program.

So we are looking forward to this hearing, and I know we have differences in the Congress and in the Senate as we go through the remaining 45 days of this session, but would hope that we could get it right on this literacy program and really find some common ground and get this passed. We have allocated resources in excess of $200 million, which is not going to solve the problem, but we have some opportunities if we move and move in a timely way, and all of us are hopeful that we can not only get it right on literacy, but that we can tie it together with the Head Start Program and tie it more effectively with our education systems, and that that will be tied more effectively to our Ready to Learn Program and our television programs. It is a small amount of money, about $7 million a year, but that is matched many times over, targeting toward reading. With all the resources out there, it would really be an incredibly missed opportunity if we don't try to get this right. We are strongly committed to working with you and with all the members to try to do that.

We do believe there ought to be some flexibility. I hope we do not get tied into some of these more rigid positions that sometimes dominate the debate, and I hope that some of our witnesses this morning will be frank and honest and candid about how we can best get on with the work and give us some guidance about the pitfalls and the potholes that are out there in terms of having this be something that is meaningful.

I just want to commend my friend and colleague, Senator Reed, who has been tireless in emphasizing the importance of libraries.

As you point out, Mr. Chairman, what a story it is on the front page of The Washington Post. On one hand, it talks about the bookworms, and right underneath that story is one about an immigrant selling a high-tech deal where he made 500—well, it is not important how much money he has made—but let us just say he is very, very successful. But I think the proximity of these two stories should not be lost.

I thank the chairman very much, and I would like to have my full statement included in the record.

The CHAIRMAN. Without objection. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Senator Kennedy follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF SENATOR KENNEDY

I commend our Chairman for scheduling today's hearing. Steps to improve child literacy are a critical part of education reform. Chairman Jeffords has been impressive in his leadership on literacy for adults, families, and children, and so have President Clinton and the First Lady. In October, 1996, the President's initiative called the "America Reads Challenge" brought needed new national attention to this issue and I strongly support his call for increased support for reading tutors and other assistance to improve child literacy.

We know that reading is the foundation of learning and the golden door to opportunity. But too many children fail to read at an acceptable level. 40% of 4th grade students do not achieve the basic level of reading. 70% fail to attain the proficient level.

For students who don't learn to read in the early years of elementary school, it is virtually impossible to keep up in school in the later years. That's why literacy programs are so important. They provide young children with practical opportunities to learn to read, and the ability to read in turn becomes the basis for greater achievement and opportunities every other area.

As schools and communities set higher standards for students, we also need to set higher standards for teachers, so that students can reach high academic goals. It is important to train teachers more effectively to teach reading in the elementary school years. Teachers are successful when they know how children learn and are trained in good teaching methods that can meet the needs of all children.

We need to do more—much more—in this area. Increased opportunities for children to read with trained tutors outside of school can enhance learning in school. Spending just one hour a week reading with a child can have a significant impact on the child's reading ability and learning ability.

College students are already involved in this effort. In Massachusetts, Harvard students work with local schools to tutor K-6 children in reading. Worcester Polytechnic Institute students serve as reading tutors at the Belmont Community School. Hampshire College in Amherst has an after-school program that focuses on tutoring in reading. President Clinton's Work-Study Initiative is already involving large numbers of college students in helping children learn to read. In Massachusetts, almost half of the colleges have already agreed to earmark part of their Work-Study funds for such tutoring. Our state has the second highest rate of participation in the nation. Our colleges are proud of their strong relationships with their communities, and the America Reads initiative will make those ties even stronger.

I also commend Chairman Jeffords for his leadership by example here in the District of Columbia. Once a week, I read with a second grade student at the Brent Elementary School as part of the program called "Everybody Wins." It's a wonderful opportunity that helps children improve their reading skills, and we get as much out of it as the students do.

In addition, we can do more to see that families receive support in making literacy a part of their children's lives, even before their children enter school. We will hear today from Dr. Perri Klass, the director of Boston's Reach Out and Read, which trains doctors to prescribe reading as part of a healthy lifestyle of children and their families.

Every child can learn to read. No child should be left out or left behind. Schools, communities, families, and children need more assistance to meet this goal, and I look forward to hearing from our witnesses about how we can do so most effectively.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Reed, would you like to take a moment?

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR REED

Senator REED. I will take just a moment, Mr. Chairman, to commend you for your leadership, as well as Senator Kennedy. I would also associate myself with the remarks of both you and Senator Kennedy about the importance of literacy and the need to move forward in a very cooperative way to pass legislation in the next several weeks. I would like to emphasize and underscore the important role that libraries play in literacy. They have always played an important role historically, and I believe that we can give them an even bigger voice and a more important role, and I hope we do that in the next several weeks.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much.

Our first panel consists of Blanche Podhajski, president and director of the Stern Center for Language and Learning in Williston, VT; Reid Lyon, chief of the Learning Disabilities and Developmental Psychology Branch at the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development in Bethesda, MD; Catherine Snow, chairman of the Committee on the Prevention of Reading Difficulties in Young Children, sponsored by the National Research Council and who hails from Cambridge, MA; and Perri Klass, a pediatrician from the Boston Medical Center in Boston, MA.

Dr. Podhajski, please go forward. We are pleased to have you here. I have been through the Stern Center a couple of times and was very impressed.

STATEMENTS OF BLANCHE PODHAJSKI, DIRECTOR, STERN CENTER FOR LANGUAGE AND LEARNING, WILLISTON, VT; CATHERINE E. SNOW, CHAIR, COMMITTEE ON THE PREVENTION OF READING DIFFICULTIES IN YOUNG CHILDREN, NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL, CAMBRIDGE, MA; REID LYON, CHIEF, CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND BEHAVIOR BRANCH, NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF CHILD HEALTH AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT, NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH, BETHESDA, MD; AND DR. PERRI KLASS, DEPARTMENT OF PEDIATRICS, BOSTON MEDICAL CENTER, BOSTON, MA

Ms. PODHAJSKI. Thank you, Senator. We appreciate your support.

Members of the committee, Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to have this opportunity to present information to you this morning about the work conducted by the Stern Center for Language and Learning over the past 15 years, not only to increase student literacy but to offer our Nation's teachers increased opportunities to further their knowledge about how to prevent reading failure.

As a nonprofit literacy institution, we see over 700 students each year, children and adults, and provide professional training to over 1,000 educators. Our goal is to help public schools unravel some of the perplexing problems demonstrated by children who fail to read. Many of these children are highly intelligent; they do not have major emotional impediments to prevent them from reading, and yet they fail to appreciate how the language works.

Isaiah is one such child. The writing sample you see on the chart to your left shows what he was able to do when he was midway through third grade. Again, this is a bright, motivated child with a bright, motivated teacher. After 10 months of intensive language instruction, the writing sample to the right reveals how he was able to progress when provided with appropriate training.

Again, these are children who do not understand how the language works, and unfortunately, their teachers have not been provided the professional development opportunities to teach them how the language works.

The language we read is the language we speak. Basically, that is how it works. We have an alphabet of 26 letters and approximately 44 sounds. Although that is not a one-to-one correspondence 50 percent of our language is phonetically predictable, another 37 percent is usually phonetically predictable, making 87 percent of the language able to be figured out. I wish Isaiah could have been able to figure it out, and I am thrilled that Isaiah is figuring it out now, after he has received appropriate instruction.

I am also pleased that the work of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, under Dr. Lyon's conscientious leadership, has offered us compelling evidence about why these children fail. They lack phonemic awareness, or the knowledge that sounds constitute words, and then they need to be taught how these sounds relate to letters or phonics. I am also thrilled to hear Catherine Snow's report from the National Research Council about how important it is for us to teach children the alphabetic principle

as well as how to use contacts and how to access wonderful, rich literature and the wealth of information that is contained in books in our libraries.

The reading wars are over. It is no longer a question of phonics versus whole language. The question now is how do we achieve meaningful balance. Balance usually implies equal amounts of different things; however, for some youngsters, it is going to mean different amounts of different things at different times in their lives.

If we are expecting this from teachers—that is, to present a myriad of reading strategies to their children—we have got to provide them with the professional development about how the language works. Crossing the bridge from speech to print will be a lot easier for those children.

The question of why it is important to provide professional development to our teachers is quite straightforward. It has been well-documented that personnel preparation for teachers both at the undergraduate and graduate levels is incomplete, that reading instruction available to children in regular classrooms is incomplete. We need to make the training more robust, both at pre-service and in-service levels.

To provide the kinds of information that we have learned through the research of the past 30 years and to be able to respect existing reading philosophies will be critical.

It is this inextricable link between student literacy and teacher knowledge that constitutes the foundation for Time for Teachers. Time for Teachers is a model professional development program that has two core elements—a didactic course which is intensive and speaks to how the language works, as well as a year-long mentorship for teachers. To date, we have over 300 teachers and over 300 related school personnel—administrators, speech and language pathologists, special educators—participating in this effort. As a consequence, classroom instruction can include how the language works, and children's literacy can increase.

Data collected so far from 1,300 youngsters in 67 classrooms shows statistically significant evidence that the spelling of youngsters in classrooms where teachers have had this training increases proportionately. We are thrilled with this evidence and thrilled to be re-funded by a private Vermont foundation to continue our work for another 3 years.

Senator KENNEDY. Doctor, I was just saying to the chairman that, therefore, we have a good excuse if we did not learn to spell—we can blame it on our teachers now.

Ms. PODHAJSKI. Even doctors do that. [Laughter.]

I wanted to bring in a link to labor as we speak. This was a piece of paper brought to our course last summer when Time for Teachers was being presented in Montpelier, VT. This was a sixth-grade news boy who left this message at the doorstep of one of the teachers who was participating in the training. As you can see, this is a young man who has not figured out how the language works and who needs a teacher who can teach him how.

I am thrilled that we are approaching the new millennium with information that was not available to us a quarter-century ago. It is an ideal opportunity for us to teach teachers how the language works as we teach children how the language works.

I thank you for the opportunity to share this information with you and appreciate your strong commitment to literacy.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, thank you very much, and we certainly appreciate your strong commitment.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Podhajski may be found in the appendix.]

The CHAIRMAN. I will now turn to Senator Kennedy to introduce Dr. Snow.

Senator KENNEDY. Mr. Chairman, as you mentioned, Dr. Snow was the leader of the Committee on the Prevention of Reading Difficulties of the National Research Council and was the principal author of the report, and she will present the findings of that committee. So that will be enormously helpful.

And, while I have the chance, Mr. Chairman, I will introduce you to Dr. Perri Klass, who is a pediatrician who works very effectively in our neighborhood health centers in Boston and also at the Boston Medical Center. She runs a medical practice in pediatric primary care at the Dorchester House, which is a neighborhood health center, and she is an accomplished author of a novel entitled, "Other Women's Children," and "Baby Doctors: Pediatrician Training," a collection of essays. So we will be looking forward to hearing from her, and I thank you for allowing me to introduce two friends from Massachusetts.

The CHAIRMAN. Ms. Snow, please proceed.

Ms. SNOW. Good morning. I am very pleased to be here as well.

It is clear that worries about whether America's children read well enough are not new, but the rising demands of a technological society have changed the definition of "adequate literacy."

As Senator Kennedy—whom I have had the privilege of voting for several times—already said——

Senator KENNEDY. Mr. Chairman, can I go back and introduce Ms. Snow again? [Laughter.]

Senator REED. Was that the same election? [Laughter.]

Senator KENNEDY. She is not from Rhode Island. [Laughter.]

Ms. SNOW [continuing]. As Senator Kennedy already said, reading well, reading fluently, and reading with comprehension is essential for entry to well-paid employment, for active participation in citizenship, for being able to do things like vote in an informed fashion, and for access to the accomplishments of civilization.

The Committee on the Prevention of Reading Difficulties in Young Children, which I had the privilege of chairing—I think "leading" is perhaps not quite the right verb there, but I did chair it—spent 2 years reviewing and synthesizing research on reading. A group of 17 experts in a wide array of areas relevant to reading and difficulties in reading instruction met seven times as a full committee and many other times in small groups to discuss the research, to write portions of the report and to review portions of the report that had been written.

Our ultimate goal, of course, was to make recommendations to educators, to parents, to publishers, to those involved in the care and instruction of young children, and of course, to legislators.

We spent those 2 years examining an enormous amount of research, attempting to draw convergent and theory-consistent conclusions from what were often somewhat discrepant findings.

Our goal was to produce an integrated, comprehensible and usable picture of how children learn go read and thus, by extension, how reading should be taught. And our focus, once again, was on the prevention of reading difficulties.

Although overall, literacy levels have not changed substantially since 1970, the educational careers of as many as 40 percent of American children are imperiled because they do not read well enough, and reading problems, most disturbingly, occur disproportionately among certain groups of children—children living in poverty, children attending large urban school systems, those who arrive at school speaking languages other than English, and members of English-speaking minority groups. It is particularly with regard to the needs of these children that we focused our attention on reducing risk and preventing difficulties.

The negative consequences for children are unacceptably high if we just let reading difficulties emerge. Addressing the potential sources of difficulty as early as possible is crucial in ensuring success. Children do not need to experience failure, and they do not need to be rooted into receiving expensive supplementary services if we address this problem from the very beginning.

The most powerful single tool in preventing reading difficulties is excellent reading instruction. The question of what constitutes good reading instruction has been fraught with conflict, in part, I think, because of the unrealistic desire for a simple answer that has kept us bouncing back and forth from one simple approach to another simple approach. Reading is complex; it is a multifaceted outcome; it is determined by many factors. And ensuring adequate reading process for every child in a heterogeneous group of 20 or 25 first- or second-graders requires providing a wide array of experiences. It requires providing an integrated set of experiences meeting the needs of all those children.

So, what experiences do they need? Children first learning to read—and I am going to repeat some of what Dr. Podhajski said and will anticipate some of what Dr. Lyon is going to say—do need appropriate help in discovering the nature of the alphabetic system. They need to understand, and many of them need to be taught to understand, that letters represent sounds.

At the same time, discovering and practicing the alphabetic principle has got to happen in the context of understanding that reading is about meaning, that we read books in order to understand what other people are saying and thinking in those books, that comprehension and communication is the purpose of reading. And furthermore, children need an enormous amount of practice. Just understanding the nature of the alphabetic principle is inadequate. We need to read enough that using that knowledge becomes automatic, becomes fluent. Reading practice, getting books from the library, reading lots of books in the classroom, spending hours and hours reading is a crucial part of adequate reading instruction.

Learning to read is a process that starts early in life. In order to benefit optimally from the kind of excellent instruction that every child should have access to in the primary grades, children should arrive in first grade with a strong basis in the prerequisite language and cognitive skills—and of course, motivated to learn to read.

In order to ensure this, we need to ensure that children have high-quality language and literacy environments in their homes and in out-of-home care settings. The committee thus recommended the expansion of affordable, language-rich, literacy-rich preschool programs. These programs have got to be designed so that they support social development, language development, cognitive development, as well as literacy development. They should not be little preschools in which literacy is being taught directly. They should be environments in which the full array of crucial preschool skills are developed.

Children at risk of reading difficulties for various reasons—hearing impairment, language difficulties or other reasons—must be identified as early as possible by pediatricians, by social workers, by early childhood practitioners. Those children need early access to enriched environments during the preschool years, and that requires knowing who they are from a very early age.

In the recommendations of this committee's report, we have put enormous burden, responsibility, on the primary and early childhood educators who are essentially responsible for preventing reading difficulties and are very often insufficiently prepared for their task. The Stern Center writ large is really what we need to think about. Practitioners dealing with children under age 8 need an enormously greater understanding than current education provides to them of how children learn to read, and that is typically not something which can be acquired in a couple of years of teach certification programs. Primary teachers and early childhood educators need ongoing professional development, continuing opportunities for mentoring and for collaborative with specialists. They need reading specialists present in their schools that they can work with and learn from so that they can continually improve their knowledge base and their practical skills.

The committee addressed the issue of reading problems once they emerge as well, and we concluded that because success in reading builds on the same set of skills for all children that children who run into difficulty typically do not need qualitatively different instruction from everyone else; they may need more focused, more intense, more individual and more responsive instruction, but the instruction that children get in special supplementary programs should be coherent, should be integrated with classroom instruction, should be a reinforcement of already high-quality classroom instruction rather than a different program.

We have talked about reading as a process of accessing meaning through use of the alphabetic principle, and thus, it seemed obvious and the committee recommended that there was little sense in teaching children to read in a language in which they could not access meaning—that is to say, a language which they did not yet speak. The committee thus recommended that reading instruction should be carried out in the child's home language if possible, and if not possible, that reading instruction should be postponed until children have achieved some oral proficiency in English, in which reading instruction will be provided.

The committee that wrote this 300-page report—which I can, of course, only give you a few highlights of in a 5-minute summary—was a large committee. It was diverse. It represented widely-vary-

ing areas of expertise and a wide range of perspectives on reading and on how to prepare children to learn to read and how to teach reading. In the end, that diverse group achieved a consensus on conclusions that are based on research and a consensus that led to a long series of very explicit recommendations about instruction, about professional development, and about redressing the risks that some children experience.

We hope this report will indeed mark the end of the reading wars and provide a basis for moving forward with the foundation of the consensus we achieve, and that ultimately, it will help even the children most at risk of reading difficulties to succeed in learning how to read.

Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Ms. Snow.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Snow may be found in the appendix.]

The CHAIRMAN. Dr. Lyon, please proceed.

Mr. LYON. Thank you, Senator Jeffords, members of the committee. I am delighted to be here. My remarks will certainly capitalize on the remarks that you have heard previously.

One of the things we are frequently asked is why the NIH and the NICHD are involved in reading research, given that we are our Nation's biomedical research arm. Our Institute, which Senator Kennedy's family was instrumental in establishing, is charged with the public health and welfare of children, and to the NIH and to the NICHD, if you do not learn to read, you simply do not make it in life. That is, illiteracy constitutes as much of a health risk as it does an educational risk.

Within that context, we have been studying reading for 33 years. We began in 1965, shortly after the Kennedy family stimulated the NICHD. In that time, we have studied 35,073 children. We are now in 36 sites around the country. Of those 35,000 children whom we are looking at in terms of reading, 21,000 of them turn out to be normal readers.

We are asking three blunt, straightforward questions: What does it take to learn how to read—what are the skills, the abilities, the conditions that have to be in place in order to get it? Second, given that we have a lot of youngsters who do not learn to read, what gets in the way? What are the impediments that keep youngsters from reading fast, accurately and fluently, and with comprehension? Third, what do you do with those children who do not learn to read? When do you do it? How do you do it?

The basic question is for which children are which teaching approaches most beneficial at which stages of development.

At the present time, we have figured out, with the help of many other researchers nationally, summarized beautifully by Dr. Snow's NRC report, which the NICHD and the Department of Education cofunded, the following things.

Question number one: What does it take to learn how to read? It takes understanding, as Dr. Podhajski pointed out, that our language that we hear is symbolized in print. Kids must understand that the words they hear are made up of tiny sounds called "phonemes." That is necessary, but not sufficient. They then must apply

those tiny sounds to letters; that is phonics, necessarily but not sufficient, but nonnegotiable as well.

Once kids have those capabilities, they have got to be able to apply them quickly. What you will see in the majority of poor readers around the country is a slow, halting, labored approach to reading, where they put so much into the print they get very little out of the meaning.

And third, and also encompassing all three, as Dr. Snow pointed out, kids have got to know they are reading for meaning. Comprehension is critical.

We figured out the first two questions fairly well, I think—what does it take to learn how to read, and what gets in the way? Lousy phoneme awareness, lousy awareness of the language structure that Dr. Podhajski pointed out.

The third question, as Dr. Snow indicated, is much more difficult. What do you do for these youngsters? The NRC report did a very good job of summarizing and synthesizing the research on the first two questions, but we are still stuck on the third—how do you teach children to read so that they optimally benefit, and how do you teach kids who do not get it to optimally benefit?

There are still controversies in this area, and they are tough to sort through because they are philosophically driven many times, rather than scientifically driven.

At the present time, we are studying 11,000 kids in 11 different sites in reading clinical trials across the country. What we have found is that if we get to children early enough, 5½ to 6 years of age, who are at risk for reading failure, and we apply instructional conditions similar to those that Dr. Podhajski pointed out, of those children, 95 percent can come right up to the average range, leaving 2.8 to 5 percent of the kids still resistant to the instruction we are giving—but that is a heck of a lot better than 20 to 30 to 40 percent.

The problem is there is a huge gap between what we understand about how you apply these instructional practices and what our teachers know, and a lot of what our teachers know again is philosophically driven, not scientifically driven. So it is a conundrum, and it is also frustrating to have the information in front of us and to watch it sit by the wayside as status quo continues in our colleges of education. It is a tough thing to watch because in a sense, we are placing children continually at risk because we simply do not use the information that we have.

Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Dr. Klass?

Dr. KLASS. Thank you very much, Senator Jeffords, Senator Kennedy. I am honored and delighted to be here, and I thank you for the work that you are doing.

As Senator Kennedy said, I am a pediatrician. I weigh babies, I measure their heads, I give them shots, I look into their ears even when they do not want me to. I also give them books as part of their routine health care. At every well-child visit from 6 months to 5 years, our patients get a new book to take home, and it comes with discussion about the importance of reading to young children, reading with young children, growing up with language, with the written word.

I am the medical director of a program based at Boston Medical Center called Reach Out and Read, which teaches pediatricians how to make books and literacy part of children's routine health care in those years before school, teaches them how to incorporate this into our regular checkups. This program has allowed me to bring together my interest in children and my love for the written word, and it also has me as part of my job going around and teaching doctors how to talk about literacy and how to talk about children's books, which means that I am often coming into hospitals and medical centers with a pile of children's books, needing to get the attention of a group of people in white coats.

So I usually start with a quiz, just to show them that even though they are experts in child development, there are still things to learn. I will show the quiz.

"In the great, green room, there was a telephone and a red balloon and a picture of the cow jumping over the"—"moon." Very good.

All right, here is the quiz. At what age can a child who has been read to, I ask them, do that—fill in the word at the end of a sentence in a familiar book. And people think about their children or their grandchildren, and they start thinking about the answer, and the answer is that before the second birthday, by the age of 18 moths, 19 months, 20 months, a child who has grown up with books and reading can start, spontaneously, to fill in the word at the end of the sentence. And right after that comes something which may be familiar to you from your own experience—what happens if you read aloud to a 2-year-old and you get a word wrong, or you read aloud to a 2-year-old, and you turn over two pages at once? The 2 year-old corrects you. You are a lot bigger than he is, but he has no hesitation.

I try to show people the little, early developmental milestones of literacy development which happen before children get to school, so that you will not be faced in the schools and so the teachers will not be faced in the schools with children who have never handled a book, who have never seen a book, who do not know how they work.

I start with this example with "Goodnight, Moon," to make two points. The first is that by the second birthday, there are differences between children who have grown up with books and reading and children who have not—not in the early grades of school, not later on in school, but by the second birthday, there are differences.

And the second point is that it is estimated that children who grow up in homes with books and reading accumulate something over 1,000 hours of book time just in those little daily read-aloud sessions before they get to school—upwards of 1,000 hours of one-to-one, parent-child, book-focused time, which even the most dedicated teacher cannot put back in the early years in school.

So I think I have three messages for you. First, whatever steps this legislation takes, the interventions have got to start early, not just in the first years of school, but way back. You know, as a pediatrician, you are trained to think preventively. I do not enjoy giving shots—no one enjoys giving shots—although I am a pretty good shot-giver. I would rather give thousands of measles-mumps-

rubella shots than treat any cases of measles in young children. I would rather give out thousands of books than see children coming to school without having grown up with books.

We now know a tremendous amount about the importance of the first 3 years of life, about brain development in early life. We also know that the children who are most at risk for reading failure, the children who are growing up in poverty, are also growing up in homes without any books at all.

In surveys of my patients at the health center, sometimes as many as 40 percent of the parents will report no books in the home, no newspapers in the home. They do not have library cards. They do not know the way to the local library. There are a lot of barriers. They do not have money. There are no bookstores in my part of town. They do not have a tradition of using the library, but most of all, the parents were not read to, and they do not think of books as important in the lives of young children.

In this program, Reach Out and Read, we have volunteers in the waiting rooms of clinics, modeling for parents how reading to young children works. I train pediatricians and health care providers how to give advice, and we are big-time advice-givers, we pediatricians. We give advice about everything. And one thing we know about giving advice is that people are more likely to follow your advice if you give them the tool, the thing to take home. Do not just tell them, call the poison center if your baby drinks something he should not. Give them a sticker to put on the telephone with the poison center number.

So at every well-child visit from 6 months to 5 years through this program, we give a book to take home, 10 books in the home before kindergarten, because there are 10 well-child visits in those years. We work with the publishers to get the books very cheaply, at about $2.50 each, which is $25 per child over 5 years to get the books into the home. That way, when you say to the parent of a 6-month-old, this is a 6-month-old book, it is chewable, it is sized for little hands, you can turn the pages with your whole hand. We say babies like to look at picture of babies. Look a the book together and name where is the nose, where is the face, where it the baby. Toddlers like rhyme and repetition. Here is a book. Try a book at bedtime.

We now have 214 sites in 43 States including, I am proud to say, the entire State of Vermont, and as I said, we have trained over 4,500 providers around the country. This has been phenomenally well-received by pediatricians, because we know—we are already seeing these children; we are already talking to their parents about language and literacy. This network and these relationships already exist, and we have been astonished to see the way that parents and children respond to these books.

I will tell you two stories, if I may. One is about a patient of mine, 18 months old. I gave the mom a book at the 18-month visit, and she came back and said: "She made me read her that book a million times. She just followed me around the house and poked me with that book until I read it to her. I got so tired of it, I hid that book, and she went and found it and made me read it to her some more."

At the 2-year-old visit, I asked, "How is that book doing?" and the mother said, rather grimly, "It is held together with duct tape now, but it is still going."

The second story from my health center is about a 4-year-old boy who come in to have stitches taken out of his eyebrow, and he said that if we would give him a book, he would hold still. He held absolutely still while we took the stitches out of his eyebrow; we read him the book while he was lying there and then gave it to him to take home.

We know that we have an impact on parents; we have measured it. In the surveys we have done, parents who received a book from their doctor were four times as likely to report that they had read to their child in the last 24 hours, and parents on AFDC were eight times as likely to report it.

We know that when we give a 6-month-old a book, we start a process which we hope will end with a child who is ready to learn to read, who loves books and who understand how they work.

We know that we are in a special position to give the books and the advice to parents and children, that we have the network and the infrastructure. We want by the year 2000 giving books at pediatric visits to be as routine as giving shots.

I would say to you that a child growing up without books is not growing up healthy, that we are changing the definition of what it means to provide health care because we are changing the definition of what it means to grow up a healthy child. A child growing up without books and reading is growing up deprived, and this should not be at this time, in this place.

So I look to you and to this legislation as an opportunity to help parents understand this and understand it early and give them the books that they need and to put the books in their homes and into the lives of the children.

I thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Klass may be found in the appendix.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much. That was very helpful testimony from all of you, which encourages us and makes us feel there is hope. But then, we get to reality, which is that the bill has only $230 million. So our question has got to be how can we best allot that money or direct it to make sure we maximize from it.

So I would ask each of you what your thoughts are about where is the best place to put the money.

Ms. PODHAJSKI. I think we need to invest in our teachers. If a teacher has a 30-year career teaching children and has approximately 20 children in her classroom each year, if we are talking about regular elementary education, we are expanding our dollars over hundreds and thousands of children. The more information we can impart to our teachers, the more we are going to be able to yield literate children.

The CHAIRMAN. Ms. Snow?

Ms. SNOW. But teaching does not start in kindergarten or first grade, so we have got to think as well about early childhood educators and professional preparation and ongoing professional development for them.

The CHAIRMAN. Dr. Lyon?

Mr. LYON. I think it is critical as we start from birth to expose youngsters to a lot of language, a lot of books and a lot of literacy as if in fact you are going to invest in people to work with parents and work with teachers that they be trained in the basic kinds of things they need to do. Reading to children, as has been pointed out, is enormously helpful in many, many ways. Many of our youngsters, however, are at risk for not getting it easily, and just reading to those children, to be straightforward with you, will increase vocabulary, will increase a love for literacy and language, but may not get them the fundamental building blocks that they have to have to read quickly, so that they like to read.

Again, if you go to any classroom and watch any kid—and we studied 34,000 of these kids—if you watch them read, and you see this slow, laborious approach, they are just like the rest of it; they hate to do it. And one of the things that predicts how well they read is understanding these language issues that Dr. Podhajski pointed out earlier.

So that if the money is going to be invested, I think it has got to carry some darned good training with it from zero to whatever.

The CHAIRMAN. Dr. Klass?

Dr. KLASS. And I would also say that we know that by the time children get to school a large number of them, as much as one-third of them, are already behind and are already classified as having problems. I would say that some of this attention must go to the very early years of life, that we must do what we can for parents who are in the home with their children, are the ones who are exposing their children to language and to books, and that all of this will be far more likely to happen if there are books in those homes, and that parents who seek their children with books, I tell you from my practice, are far more likely to find their way to the library, because you can say to them, "Do you know where there are more books?" and that they are far more likely to find their way to the programs where they can get extra help and counseling, and their children will get support. And I would think about ways to get books especially to very young children so that they will understand how they work and understand their appeal.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Kennedy?

Senator KENNEDY. I want to go back to the training of teachers. Dr. Lyon was saying that there is a gulf between what is happening in the schools of education and what you are coming up with. Just very briefly, how do we cross that gulf?

Mr. LYON. One of the things that is going to help significantly is the NRC report from the committee that Dr. Snow chaired. It has brought together in the best manner yet the available information. But as I said, and we have got to look directly at this, knowing what it takes to learn to read is not the same as how you teach it. And we are still somewhat stuck on a number of philosophical orientations to the instruction of reading which are not supported by converging evidence. I cannot be any more straightforward.

Reading is not a natural act; kids do not just pick it up. And that is where I think the teacher preparation issue has got to be built on research that converges, just like research in any public health domain provides the grist for the training program.

Senator KENNEDY. If we are talking about teachers, I suppose we are also talking about how they work with parents as well—that is obvious. So when you mention getting teachers who are involved in early education, you are talking about not only teaching the children, but teaching the parents, I assume.

Ms. PODHAJSKI. As well as child care providers.

Senator KENNEDY. Thank you.

Dr. Klass, under Medicaid, we have a lot of prevention programs built in there, so we have sort of a system in place where, at least in terms of testing children under Medicaid, they have at least routine kinds of contacts, or they should, and there are many children who are not in Medicaid who should be, including over 55,000 in my own State. But when you say you have those kinds of interventions, are you talking about trying to think about something that could be effective during those kinds of interventions where you have, as a matter of those routine procedures, contacts with pediatricians and that this may be an opportunity where this kind of intervention in terms of books would be useful? Does that make some sense, and should we be thinking about that, and if you have thought about it, do you have some ideas or suggestions about how we could routinize that?

Dr. KLASS. In all of these questions, my mind always goes first to the issue of how can you reach the people who are hardest to reach; how can you reach the most recalcitrant people, because those are probably the families whose children are most at risk, the parents who are least likely to be the parents that you can work with when their children get to school.

Well, in the medical world, we see everybody. There are a lot of incentives. If you are getting WIC, you have got to have your immunizations up-to-date. To go to school, you have got to have all your shots. And also, you know perfectly well that even parents who do not take particularly good care of themselves still bring their children to the doctor.

Now, at those visits, it is already our job and our responsibility and our charter to be talking about language and development. Does the 6-month-old babble; does the 12-month-old say "Mommy"; does the 15-month-old have another word or two; can the 2-year-old put two words together? We have got to ask about that; it is our job. And if we do not ask about it, we miss hearing problems and developmental——

Senator KENNEDY. How often do they ask about it? That is something you are working on it, but more often than not, it does not happen?

Dr. KLASS. Oh, no. We ask about it, and I think that pediatricians and people working in children's health are very conscious about the need to ask about it, and being able to talk about literacy and books gives them a tool to not just ask about it, but to offer the parents a concrete way to move forward and help their children.

Senator KENNEDY. Finally, you mentioned the 214 sites that you have. Just briefly, what is happening at those sites?

Dr. KLASS. Those are 214 hospitals, neighborhood health centers, clinics and pediatric practices at which there are Reach Out and Read Programs established, volunteer readers in the waiting room,

advice about reading and literacy for the parents at every well-child visit, and a free book to take home at every well-child visit from 6 months to 5 years.

Senator KENNEDY. Should every neighborhood health center have this program?

Dr. KLASS. Absolutely.

Senator KENNEDY. Do we have them in Massachusetts at every center?

Dr. KLASS. We have them in every one in Boston and in most of the others, and we are expanding.

Senator KENNEDY. I hope you will work with us as we try to get it in every center. We have over 1,000 dealing with 10 million children, often the poorest children, and we will work with you and see what we can do.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Reed?

Senator REED. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to follow up with Dr. Klass. I am just delighted to hear about Reach Out and Read. I understand that we have at least three locations in Rhode Island involved with Reach out and Read—Thundermist Health Associates in Woonsocket; Blackstone Valley Community Health Center in Central Falls; and Family Health Services in Cranston. And also, I believe the Rhode Island Foundation is working with you, which is a philanthropic foundation.

Dr. KLASS. Absolutely.

Senator REED. I think you are doing an excellent job. Could you briefly describe your Book Donation Partnership and also any other attempts to work with other not-for-profit organizations similar to yours?

Dr. KLASS. We have a great many partners, and that is part of what has made the program succeed and made it strong. We are working with the National Association of Community Health Centers as well as with the National Association of Children's Hospitals and related institutions. We have a close relationship with First Book and with Reading is Fundamental. We have also worked closely with publishers in order to get book donations, books available very cheaply, book credits, and have worked with both public and private partners to try to make the books available, to get the right books, and to get them into the institutions, and we expect to have the entire State of Rhode Island, all the health centers, and also, Hasbro Children's Hospital has been a real center, both of research and of activity in the Reach Out and Read Program.

Senator REED. Well, again, let me know if I can be helpful to you in that regard, because I think you are doing some great work.

Let me just ask a general question for the other panelists. I am concerned, and I think the chairman is also concerned, about the role of libraries. Listening to Dr. Klass' testimony, it struck me that in the poorest neighborhood in Rhode Island, South Providence—where my parish church is located, has changed tremendously over the last 50 years, from an Irish-Jewish neighborhood to a Latin-black neighborhood—there are no bookstores, but there is a public library. And it seems to me that in the poorest neighborhoods in major urban areas, there are still public libraries. What

do you think we can do to enhance the role of libraries in the literacy program—and I will just go right down the line.

Dr. Podhajski?

Ms. PODHAJSKI. I can still recollect being ready to at story hour in my home town library. To me, being read to as well as being familiar with how to read books is critical. Language that embellishes vocabulary, language that stimulates sentence structure development, language that builds comprehension is going to be a stepping stone to being a literate person.

Senator REED. Dr. Snow?

Ms. SNOW. Libraries are a crucial resource. However, reading and reading to one's child is a behavior which parents have got to undertake and which, to a very large extent, children can stimulate by demand it.

Libraries are places where books are. Unfortunately, Head Start Programs are not typically places where there are lots of books. Early childhood classrooms serving particularly poor children, increasingly, the day care programs that will be serving children of mothers going off welfare, are not typically places where there are lots of books.

We need to ensure that books become a part of children's lives in all of those settings, and particularly in settings that are meant to be providing the language and literacy experiences to prepare them for school, such as Head Start, it is criminal that books are not an automatic part of those environments.

Senator REED. Thank you.

Dr. Lyon?

Mr. LYON. Senator, I just want to concur with what has just been said. We have a lot of symphony halls as well, but not that many great musicians. It does go to behavior. We have spent a lot of money over the past 33 years figuring out what it takes to learn to read—sound structure, phonics, speed, and comprehension.

Librarians would be excellent candidates for understanding a modicum of information about how to do that, so when the youngsters are in the library and they are being read to, they are being made aware of those things that are critical to learn how to read—so much more focused, if you will. The library itself is not going to do it. And again, the youngsters most at risk are those from single-parent homes, those from poverty, those who are second language learners, and those without books in the home, those who live with parents who do not read that well or do not have books in the home.

It is incumbent on us to build on what we know from the research, and that can be done at every level of this literacy endeavor.

Senator REED. Just briefly, it seems that your comments all stress the critical technical skills that one must have in order to be an effective teacher and in order to make reading real in the lives of children. Yet there seems to be a great surge of interest around here for—for want of a better term—amateur involvement in reading programs, for enlisting lots of volunteers. There are proposals for alternative certification of teachers, and I think implicit in that is the sense of some people that teaching technique is not

really what is important, that what is important are life experiences and those sorts of things.

But I think that what you are telling us is that to be a good teacher, you must have a lot of very technical skills that you scientifically develop over several years and that unless we reinforce that professional base, we are going to spend a lot of money and have a lot of good feelings and have lots of people reading to kids, but we are not going to increase literacy in America. Is that a fair comment?

Mr. LYON. I think we could guarantee that.

Senator REED. Anyone else?

Ms. PODHAJSKI. Again, it is a question of balance. I know Senator Jeffords reads every week with a young man, and I think that is fabulous.

Senator REED. Well, he has lots of skills, though.

Ms. PODHAJSKI. But we also need to have that balance where somebody else provides the technical knowledge. And right now, we have the most severely handicapped readers working with the least-trained individuals. There is something wrong with that picture.

Ms. SNOW. Reading practice is one component of good reading instruction, and tutors can help provide practice. Loving to read is certainly a positive feature, and tutors can help promote that. But tutors are not trained teachers, and even trained teachers are often not sufficiently trained to do the job that needs to be done.

Mr. LYON. Senator, what we see every day—we start studying the youngsters we study too late. We start at 5 years of age, before they get into school. Some of our kids now in the State of Connecticut with the Shawitz Group are now 20 and 21, as Senator Dodd knows.

Walking with those youngsters through life from 5 to 21 is a fascinating process, but a very sad one for those who do not learn to read. Many of those youngsters felt pretty excited and vibrant about reading initially. They loved to be around books, and they loved to be read to. But when they are 8 and 9 years of age and expected to "read to learn," and they do not have those kinds of linguistic capabilities or language tools, they do not like it anymore. So it is a wonderful thing to provide all of the literacy support we can—there is no doubt about it—but as I think you have pointed out, it is a pretty hefty jump to think that if we just engage in oral reading and literacy interaction without understanding some of these conditions, we are probably in trouble.

Senator REED. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Reed.

Senator Murray?

Senator MURRAY. thank you, Mr. chairman, and thank you for holding this hearing. I think this is a really, really critical issue that we need to address, and I cannot help but remind us all of the great work that Senator Simon has done in this area.

I would like to ask permission to submit my statement for the record.

The CHAIRMAN. Without objection.

[The prepared statement of Senator Murray follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF SENATOR MURRAY

Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you for inviting great panelists for our hearing today. I want to acknowledge your leadership and that of Senators Kennedy, Dodd, and others for your ongoing work to promote literacy. I want to also thank you for keeping literacy discussions bipartisan and productive. Senator Paul Simon is not sitting up here on the dais with us today, but I know he is overjoyed that we are working to improve literacy in our Nation.

The ability to read is nearly equivalent in my mind to the ability to succeed in life. It is true that many adult learners have succeeded in work or other areas of life, despite lacking literacy skills. But when they finally learn the skills of literacy, they almost universally feel as if they have missed out on something very important. Reading is so important in today's complicated world.

The inability to read can mean lack of confidence about being a good parent. It can mean lack of employment, lack of full citizenship, jeopardized health status, low self-esteem, and a profound sense of missed opportunity. Alter watching children when I was a preschool teacher, and paying attention to my children's classmates as they grew up, I can tell you that no matter what other potential problems a child faced—if the child was developing the skills of reading, no challenge seemed insurmountable. If the child did not acquire the skills, the smallest obstacle could be overwhelming.

So, this is some of the most important work of the U.S. Senate, the creation of this literacy legislation.

As we toil over its construction—it is critical that we look at all our tools, and choose them well. The current "system" of literacy improvement is not always fully evident to the human eye, it is so broad.

In addition to the classroom teachers and reading specialists in our public and private schools, there is an army of librarians; teachers at higher educational levels; adult and family literacy experts; book distribution experts; reading tutors and other volunteers ad volunteer coordinators and program administrators.

There are people in television and radio and closed-captioning; people teaching in correctional facilities; people teaching the homeless; people teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages; researchers; writers; theorists; book publishers; and students who are helping other students learn to read.

There are many others I haven't mentioned, but perhaps the most important link that all new readers have in common I did not mention in my list—parents and families.

Family literacy is so important, so vital, that it must be mentioned on its own. Today, the Reading Excellence Act contains some provisions for family literacy, but if in the end the bill does not strengthen and improve family literacy in this country, then we will have wasted everyone's time and money. Because it is by strengthening families, and helping parents become their child's first and best teacher—that we nurture and support a nation of readers.

Again, we have a broad system, with many participants. And when we construct a child and family literacy improvement bill,

every line doesn't have to provide something for every type of literacy advocate out there—but we must never forget the full range of literacy providers—because we need all of them and all their hard work if we are to succeed.

The funds contained in the Reading Excellence Act—$210 million—is a very limited amount of federal resources available for this challenge, when viewed from the national perspective. But there are many other pots of federal, state, and local funds available to help teach children and their families to read—and many in-kind donations and volunteer hours.

As a Member of the Appropriations Committee, I strongly urge that whatever we do in this bill, we also support increased appropriations for the many other facets of the literacy effort that are not contained in this bill. Despite the army of willing helpers, fostering a literate citizenry has a financial cost. The good news is that there are few investments with a better investment on return.

Because of the tight resources, we must be choosy about where we put our money in this bill. I don't think, for example, that we should carve out funds here to pay for book distribution efforts. But we must imagine the real world, where book distribution is part of the literacy patchwork—and needs to have supports, financial or otherwise, to succeed.

One word that shows up in the bill many times and will be in our discussion is the word "training." It is my belief that we must acknowledge, invest in, and improve the training of everyone working on literacy, from the family to the teachers, and specifically—the training of volunteers and tutors.

Along with Chancellor Bunting from Vermont, I believe that one of our goals "should be to sustain and strengthen those modest incentives which would further engage our nation's talent and energy in this essential crusade." I feel that training is essential to the support of the volunteer and tutoring systems, not just for training for individual tutors to work with individual students, but training for volunteer coordinators, training for trainers, and training for program administrators. A tall order, I realize.

But, let's imagine how this bill will work. It's not enough to just tell a college student to sit down and help this child learn to read. It may not even be enough to provide the intensive day of training that the Vermont program includes. What we do know is that it is going to be essential to build the kinds of partnerships between government organizations and community-based organizations that they have built in Vermont.

If we are to succeed in the training component or any other single element of this bill, we will have to identify community resources, fund key parts of the system, and include the child's family and primary reading teacher in all discussions.

So as we look at each segment of the bill, let's remember what will be needed at the community level, what systems and funding sources are already in place, and how to make the most of all the resources available to us. We use funds wisely to fund the links between all the parts of the literacy army.

We must think and rethink this, and pass a bill that will allow leveraging of money, time, and energy. The task is that large, the resources are that scarce, and the challenge is that critical.

Thank you.

Senator MURRAY. What really strikes me as I listen to you is that we have tremendous disparities, obviously, between young children in terms of their ability to learn to read. And today's world is very complex. As Ms. Snow mentioned, welfare reform has created a whole group of children who are in day care centers and in preschools. The disparity among preschools is great—it is good for parents to have choices, but we can't allow choice to cause further disparity among children. Parents have a choice of where to put their kids and what kind of learning they want early on. But as a result of that, there are many different people out there working with our young kids, and I would have to say the two most important people in our young children's lives are the teacher or child care person whom they are with, and their parent. And oftentimes, the kids who have parents who are really pushing their kids, also have them in the day care or the preschool which is really pushing them; and conversely, the parents who may not know how to read themselves and may not have the skills—their children wind up in the preschools with the teachers who may be missing these same skills.

How do we go about balancing that? What are your recommendations, and how do you think we should deal with that challenge?

Ms. PODHAJSKI. It is as easy to train child care providers as it is to train parents and to train teachers in this research-based information. There is a wealth of knowledge available to us about how children rhyme and how we can do effective pre-literacy intervention. As Senator Kennedy indicated earlier, it is a question of when we provide this training, and it is never too early.

Ms. SNOW. The greatest demands for education are the demands made by at-risk 3-year-old, 4-year-old, 5-year-old and 6-year-old children, and the educators serving those children are the ones with the least preparation to do so. Those of us with Ph.D.s get to work with graduate students who are already very literate and know a lot. But people serving children in Head Start programs typically have high school diplomas, and if they are well-educated, they have child development associate degrees. These are people who are tremendously dedicated, who are willing to work for low wages, who are very interested in the development and success of the children in their care, and they need our help. They need to learn how to do this better. They need the tools to do it better, they need the books to work with, they need the materials. They need to understand that children grow, but that they can also be helped to grow in richer, deeper, more elaborated ways than they will grow all by themselves, that there is a reason for having adults in those classrooms, and the reason is that the adult knows more, the adult can stimulate wonderful conversations, the adult can read books, the adult can lay out some of the basics of the nature of literacy.

That is why we have children in Head Start programs, and yet we are spending altogether too much time in programs like that, helping children brush their teeth.

Senator MURRAY. It is a real challenge, because if we have requirements that day care people or preschool teachers must have some sort of skill set in order to be licensed—and this is a huge

debate—we would then preclude a lot of people from doing it, and we would have less care, and we would create a sort of underground network, frankly, for people to leave their kids.

So it is a real challenge, and I think we have got to really focus on giving training in reading acquisition all those adults who are out there who work with young children—both the parents, I would say, and the teachers.

The other thing I wanted to touch on quickly is that I was really interested in the discussion across the table here about the phonics versus whole language debate that goes on everywhere. My State legislature just had a long session where the main topic, as it appears from the press that I read, was this debate about "phonics only" and phonics-only bills versus "whole language."

What do you say to people who just absolutely believe in the "phonics-only" approach?

Mr. LYON. The ability to read requires a number of conditions to be in place. Just like the ability to play piano requires a number of things, the ability to be a great athlete, the ability to do anything requires certain skills.

Learning to read requires different skills at different levels of development. The phonics-whole language debate is a philosophical issue. It is not a scientific issue. The NRC report has done a very wonderful job of laying out these conditions that need to be in place—I do not mean to speak for Catherine's report. We are actually studying at NIH why both professionals and parents, and some politicians as well, seem to glom onto these polar opposites when you are looking at a dimension of things that the kid ultimately has to do.

We do know some things. We do know that a lot of the youngsters that are immersed into literature-based programs, who have the characteristics that we have been discussing just now, are at high risk for failure, and the issue is the type of instructional approach is not providing them with those linguistic skills directly enough. It does not have anything to do with philosophy, and it does not have anything to do with politics. It has to do with making sure the kids get the ideas. That is it.

So that some kids clearly come into kindergarten and first grade already reading in our samples. We go back and look at their families, and their parents taught them quite well—they read to them, they read "Dr. Seuss," they used magnetic letters, and the kids had an affinity for reading. But even a lot of kids who are read to and come from middle to upper-middle class homes do not get it, either, and if you immerse those children into methodologies that do not get the clarity to them that they need, about how the sounds work and how they map on letters and how they develop speed, we are shot.

We probably produce a heck of a lot of literacy by doing just what you said—by polarizing along this idiotic debate.

Senator KENNEDY. Would you yield on that, just so I can ask a question? I tried to listen carefully about where we come out. You gave a wonderful explanation, and I do not know if any of us are going to be able to repeat that on the floor of the Senate.

Are you saying that for some children, one system works better at one time, and for other children it works better at another time,

and that we should be sufficiently flexible to permit the educator to be able to make those kinds of judgments and utilize their expertise appropriately to help every child learn to read?

Mr. LYON. Yes, Senator.

Senator KENNEDY. Could you say it so I can quote it on the floor? [Laughter.] They are not interested in what I say. Please excuse me, Senator Murray.

Senator MURRAY. No; that is all right.

Mr. LYON. To be able to read our language, you have got to know the sounds, you have got to know how to map it onto the letters—that is phonics—you have got to do it quickly, and you have got to know why you are reading and have good vocabulary and the things that Dr. Snow spoke about.

It is never an either/or. Maybe an analogy will help. There are some people who come to the playing of the piano who require much less detail work on the skill side and more conceptual work up top. It is as straightforward as if you do not get the print off the page quickly, it does not matter how interesting and fascinating that text is and how rich that literature is. It just does not matter because you cannot access it, you cannot get it into the system.

The research we do shows that to get the print off the page, you have got to know the sounds, you have got to lay it on top of the letters. That is called the "alphabetic principle." That is what the NRC report talks about as one first thing that readers have got to have. Fluency is another one. They have got to be quick at it. Any of us in this room who do something slowly and laboriously generally quit doing it after a while because it is simply too hard.

So that when teachers are looking at their youngsters, whether they are from zero to 5, or from 3 to 20, what they have got to ask themselves is what does it take to learn how to read. It takes sound structure. It takes mapping that to the letters, phonics. I know it is the "F" word these days, but it is not negotiable. It takes speedy application of phonics to the print so the kid gets it in. And all though that process, it takes understanding why you read, for comprehension and for meaning.

Again, a lot of kids come to us in these very large samples having sound and having phonics, but a lot of them do not. And I do not know what the exact numbers are, but I would bet you that anywhere from 30 to 40 percent of our Nation's children need to have those coding issues clarified, and that is a guess. We are studying the 30th percentile and below, and I can tell you clearly that they need it.

So to answer your question, that is the training issue that we are looking at. Our teachers are method-driven. They are typically trained phonics, or they are typically trained whole language, and that is not their fault. They are constrained, then, in their application of what they are trying to do with the kids.

It is like somebody teaching an athlete only one way to get to a particular goal, when the athlete has to master several skills and integrate those.

Ms. SNOW. To use the athlete analogy, which I think is a very good one, great baseball players take batting practice, but they also have to bat in real games against a variety of pitchers, not just against the pitchers on their own team. And the challenge of

honing the skills does not really get you very far unless you understand what you are honing the skills for—how you bat in a game. That batting in a game involves not always hitting the ball; sometimes, it means taking a pitch, sometimes, it means bunting, sometimes, it means getting the walk. There is a purpose to this activity. We are not learning to read in order to read letters. We are learning to read in order to receive messages. And it is not the case that you can concentrate on the skills for a couple of years and then move to concentrating on the purpose. You have got to integrate the instruction around the skills and around the purpose and the practice all at the same time, and you need to be very smart and very well-trained to help children do that.

Senator MURRAY. So that what you are saying is that if a teacher only teaches one way, some kids will get it, and some will not.

Mr. LYON. Yes.

Senator MURRAY. So we need to go back to our universities that are training teachers and making sure that they learn a lot of different ways that they can integrate into their instruction.

Mr. LYON. Yes. And be able, instead of asking what method do I use, or what kind of teacher am I, what does it take to know how to read. And then one can use a variety of methodologies to get each of those things in place, honed, as Catherine says, and integrated.

Again, this division between phonics and whole language, in medicine, we would call malpractice. It is that straightforward.

Senator MURRAY. I am curious—in your opinion, do we train our K through 3 teachers well in this country?

Mr. LYON. No.

Ms. PODHAJSKI. No.

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Dodd, it is your turn to turn it around now.

Senator DODD. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I will ask unanimous consent to put a statement in the record.

The CHAIRMAN. Without objection.

[The prepared statement of Senator Dodd follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF SENATOR DODD

I congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing. There are few people in this body today who have done more on behalf of literacy than yourself. I look forward to working with you and other members of this Committee to draft legislation that will promote literacy for our nation's children.

Mr. Chairman, as you know, there are few skills today which are more important to the lifeblood of this nation than literacy. It is what makes us good employees, good parents, and good citizens. Imagine not being able to read—from start to finish, each day would be nearly impossible. You would have no knowledge of current events through the newspaper, no way to check your child's homework, no idea of how many calories are in that serving of cereal, and most likely, no job—and that's just breakfast, Mr. Chairman.

Yet, too many of our children are leaving schools lacking in this basic skill essential to their livelihood and the quality of their life. But, for the child who cannot read, the problem begins much ear-

lier than graduation. Research has shown that children who fall behind usually do not catch up or become fluent readers unless expensive, intensive help is available to them. If such help is not available, these children become increasingly frustrated and are at higher risk of dropping out of school altogether.

Our goal today must be to help all children to read well, to read independently, and, importantly, to enjoy reading. We have a tremendous advantage in reaching this goal in that we know so much more about the physiological process of learning to read and what works and what does not. For example, researchers at Yale University School of Medicine, using the marvel of functional magnetic resonance imaging technology (fMRI), just identified specific neurological bases for dyslexia, a reading affliction that plagues some 10 million Americans. Imagine how this research will help those afflicted with dyslexia learn to read.

Parents and teachers have known for years that the process of learning to read involves a combination of different techniques, and that to be successful the process is child-dependent. Recent research findings confirm this. However, classroom practice in too many communities has not caught up. Teaching reading is a complex activity that requires a great deal of knowledge and skill. We must focus upon training and retraining teachers to effectively teach reading based upon this new research. We must also ensure reading intervention programs are available to help identify those children who are struggling with reading and provide specially trained reading teachers to assist them.

Parents must also be a core focus of any legislation. Children's literacy levels are directly related to the literacy ability and interest of their parents, especially their mothers. The values, attitudes and expectations held by parents and other care givers with respect to literacy will have a lasting effect on a child's attitude about learning to read. I am proud to say that my own state of Connecticut is budding with efforts to encourage the vital resource of school-home partnerships. At the Eli Whitney School in Enfield, Connecticut, parents not only come to classes to hear their children read, but to read themselves, demonstrating the importance of reading in their lives, parents and children also sit down to do interactive homework together, and on Grandparent's Day, grandparents of students write and share an essay in response to the question, "What was it like in school when I was young?"

We must also work to ensure that children spend their preschool years in environments conducive to cognitive, linguistic, and social development. In order for children to learn to be successful readers, they must arrive at kindergarten and first grade with strong language and cognitive skills, and already motivated to learn to read. To build this foundation for reading, we should equip our preschool and child care settings with resources for language development and literacy.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I cannot overstate the power of volunteers to make a difference in the reading success of a child. Like you and many other of my colleagues, read to a child each week at one of D.C. public schools. This experience has been incredibly valuable. No teacher has the time to sit an read one on one with a child—and it is only through practice that children can learn to

read quickly. Trained volunteers can fill this important role. I know my volunteering has given a fresh outlook with exposure to a teen girl's favorite in the Babysitter's Club series books.

Mr. Chairman, this is a very exciting time. Our nation is motivated to improve literacy rates. Many states, including my own, are actively promoting literacy efforts. We, in this body should do all we can to help these promising endeavors flourish. I look forward to working with you to move a literacy bill forward quickly.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Senator DODD. Dr. Lyon, it is a pleasure to see you again. We co-chaired a National Summit on Learning Disabilities several years ago—maybe both of us had black hair in those days—but it is a pleasure to hear you and to listen to the discussion and commentary.

Speaking of memories of childhood, Mr. Chairman, I recall, Mrs. Peterson, who was my first grade teacher. And I remember very, very clearly the day when she pinned a note on me and sent me home, and that note read: "Let the proudest boy in West Hartford, CT read his first book to you." I remember that day as if it were yesterday and that wonderful sense of achievement and pride in being able to read to my mother.

I think this story in The Washington Post this morning highlights the importance of families and of home life. I remember my parents every night reading. There was a sense at home that this was something that was valuable and was something I wanted to do. There is the athletic comparison; young boys, older boys watching in the neighborhood play a game, want to do the same. And that sense of wanting to emulate is an important part of all this. We often get caught up with the training techniques; but we cannot undervalue role models early on. Children understand through parental or other involvement the importance of reading and the connection between being able to read words off a page understand the message in that text.

I want to raise just a couple of issues with you, if I can. Dr. Lyon, did you mention the Whitney School? The Eli Whitney School in Enfield, CT has a very good reading program, but they also bring parents in to read, because what we are dealing with in too many instances are parents who just do not read themselves, so there is none of that reinforcement going on. In many cases, you are talking about parents who left school early, and do not like going back into those schools. And as we know so well, the pattern just reinforces itself generation after generation.

In Connecticut, 45 percent of our adult population have serious reading deficiencies it always surprises people to hear those numbers are true in Connecticut, but I suspect we are not terribly far off the national numbers.

I want to touch on a couple of issues. One is the whole question of special education. We raised this a week ago during the debate on the floor of the Senate about allocation of resources. I will not go into all the detail on what is happening, because most people are aware of it, but we are watching special education costs go up considerably.

One of the concerns that is being raised, and I do not think illegitimately by people, is that we are misdiagnosing people as having

special education problems when it is a reading problem. And we are spending a fortune on special education services and taxpayers across this country are becoming more and more irate every day as they watch these bills come in for special education costs. What we are going to do is place a lot of very legitimate special education students in jeopardy as people rebel against these rising property taxes and State taxes, that are necessary to pay for the costs.

In my State now, we rank number five or six in the country in special education costs. One out of every seven children is classified as a special education child. In Greenwich, CT, it is something like one out of every four. So you are looking at the cost—Torrington, CT, a relatively small town, in 2 years went from $635,000 to $1.3 million in special education costs. I have one community in my State of Connecticut where one child has real needs, but it costs $125,000 for that child.

I wonder if you could discuss this relationship between reading and special education and comment on the importance of that linkage and whether you agree with what I said earlier, that is, that we are misdiagnosing the special education problem as a reading problem, which is different than a special education problem.

Let me begin with you, Dr. Lyon, because I know you have done a lot of work in this area.

Mr. LYON. I will approach it this way, because in fact, our largest study of these issues is in Connecticut. It is centered at Yale, and that is Sally and Ben Shawitz' longitudinal study.

The largest category within special education is learning disabilities. The largest category within learning disabilities, which has seven areas statutorily, is learning disabilities in reading. Now, let me try to explain it this way. Again, in Connecticut and now in several other States, we start studying members of the population at-large at 5 years of age, and then we follow them for at least 5 years. Many kids who in our intervention studies are identified early, which we can do now, and are provided the appropriate kinds of interventions move right out of those reading problems. Those who are not provided early intervention generally will continue to have a reading problem for the rest of their school years if we do not get to them by 9 years of age.

I think one of the windows on your particular question about numbers is this. If we can get to kids who have lousy reading skills, kindergarten, first and second grade, and if we can get to them with the right stuff—or at least what we think is the right stuff now, because we clearly do not have all the answers—in all of our sites, anywhere from 2.8 to 5 percent the kids are all that are left with difficulties, more on the 2.8 side.

So again, to be blunt about it, I think our instructional factors, either because they are not applied quickly enough or they do not have the right "oomph" to them, produce these kinds of things which are later identified as learning disabilities and so forth. There is clearly something known as learning disabilities. You and I have a mutual friend in Ann Ford, who has been wonderful in her support for that particular category of kids, and those youngsters clearly are there. But when we teach these kids early, generally, 2.8 to 5 percent are the ones who are still going to have a little bit of difficulty, and that is only because we have not figured

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it out. It is not 17 percent, it is not 5 or 10 percent, it is not 20 percent.

Senator DODD. Does anyone else want to comment on that?

Ms. PODHAJSKI. In some States, it has leapt to 40 percent, and that is certainly an artificial number.

Senator DODD. Forty percent——

Ms. PODHAJSKI. Forty percent of youngsters being identified as learning-disabled. That just defies statistics. What we are talking about is a large number of curriculum casualties—children who have not had instruction, again, in how the language works. You will be pleased to know that Vermont's professional development initiative starts in Bridgeport, CT tomorrow for 6 days, when over 100 teachers will be trained in how to provide this information within regular classrooms. The Hartford Current has had cover stories in the high incidence——

Senator DODD. Yes, all last week, in the last 2 weeks. I should put that in the record in fact, Mr. Chairman. It has been a great series.

The CHAIRMAN. It will be put in.

[Information may be found in the appendix.]

Ms. PODHAJSKI. Again, we need to help our regular educators and save our special educators for those who are truly handicapped.

Senator DODD. Yes. And part of the difficulty—and I would invite anyone else to comment on this if they wish—is who is doing the identifying, who is making the decision about who goes into this category? Are we sort of moving children immediately into special education and putting a label on them, instead of recognizing that this is really something that is much more treatable, than going through what you would normally think of it you go to a special education effort?

Who makes those decisions?

Ms. SNOW. Well, we have to remember that the decisions are not crazy decisions. These are children who indeed have not achieved levels of reading that are appropriate for their age and their educational histories. So we must not abandon the children who really are having problems——

Senator DODD. No; no one is suggesting that.

Ms. SNOW [continuing]. In the process of preventing the continuation of this situation in which so many children are placed in those categories unnecessary.

We do not know—the 2.8 percent that Reid mentions is probably a high estimate. If we really had excellent preschool classrooms for all these kids, if we had excellent parent education programs, if we had excellent kindergartens and excellent first grade reading instruction, that might be down to .5 percent. We do not know because we have not yet done the social experiment of really engaging in serious prevention efforts.

The other point that you make is a very important one. Children should not need to be labeled before they can get special services. If a first-grader is starting to show problems in understanding what his or her classmates are understanding with ease, that child should be able to get some special help immediately, right away, without having to go through an evaluation, an identification, a la-

beling process, which can have long-term negative consequences for the child.

Senator DODD. As you just stated, my experience has been that some of the people making these diagnoses are totally unqualified to be making them, and we are shoving a lot of children into a category. And it does a lot of different things. For the child who really does need that category and help, we are diluting resource that would provide the meaningful assistance to him or her. We are labeling children who do not necessarily belong in special education, and we are not dealing with the fundamental issue, which is fairly straightforward, and that is in many cases, the problem is learning to read.

Mr. LYON. Yes. And in a sense, the diagnostic criteria that we employ, that is employed in Connecticut, for example, will not allow someone to be identified as learning-disabled until about 8½ to 9 years of age, irrespective of the reason, whether it is poor reading or not.

Again, we know that if we do not get assistance to kids, informed instruction by well-trained teachers, 75 percent of those kids are going to continue with the difficulty.

One of the recent findings we have that we are replicating now, and the replications look fairly good, is that kindergarten, 5½ and 6 years of age, the amount of time it takes to move a particular reading skill, to teach a particular reading skill to at-risk kids is taking about 30 minutes per day, 5 days per week, whether it is sound structure or phonics or fluency, all within a good literature-integrated context, as Catherine pointed out.

By fourth grade, the same skill generally now requires 2 hours if this is a kid below about the 15th percentile. So you are quadrupling the instructional time, the intensity, and of course, we do not have the manpower, woman power, or teacher power to do that.

Senator DODD. My time is up, and I know we have another panel, Mr. Chairman. I just want to underscore the point made by Dr. Klass earlier. I think these neighborhood clinics are terrific places. We have raised the suggestion of getting some of our major book publishers in this country who end up with a lot of excess copies to donate these books. What a wonderful way, this would be to make a significant contribution. Currently, many of these books go to waste if not sold. If they would be willing to start a distribution system to some of these neighborhood facilities, that would really be a tremendous asset. It would be just a wonderful place to begin that process with parents, even in the prenatal period, to help them begin to appreciate the importance of reading.

I subscribe to the notion of parents reading out loud when they are pregnant—voices, the sound of a voice has a wonderful impact. While studies on the infants brain reinforce the understanding. People have understood it for eons as part of good parenting. The sound of a voice reading or singing to a child not yet born has a wonderful, wonderful impact in terms of how that child responds to parents at birth and thereafter.

So I want to underscore that point, Mr. Chairman. I think it is very, very important that we look for some creative ways in which to provide more reading material and promote the notion of reading.

With that, I thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. I think I will take the last question, if no one minds. We have this $230 million program, and in the perfect world, let us say our decision is that we should start at 2 years of age, or earlier. What does the pediatrician do?

Dr. KLASS. As part of our conversations with parents and young children about growth and development, as part of encouraging language, as part of encouraging healthy development, we would emphasize at every turn the importance of exposure to books, exposure to print. I listened to you talk about children in schools, and I tremble for my patients, because they are not coming to school with that motivation and that connection to books—which is admittedly not enough—but without the desire to play, you are not going to have your baseball players; without the desire to read and the love for books, you are not going to do the work that you need to do. So we would push that, and we would give them books so there would be books——

The CHAIRMAN. OK. If nothing is happening in the home, what do you do? Whom do you report to? Is there someone you should report to to let them know that you have a kid coming along that you had better give some help to?

Dr. KLASS. Ideally, we have early intervention specialists to refer the children to——

The CHAIRMAN. Where would they be?

Dr. KLASS. In early intervention centers. We try to get children into early Head Start programs. We can try, depending on the health center and the creative programs that are available, to send people out into the home to teach parenting skills and to bring tools into the home.

I think that as pediatricians, we are incredibly aware of how barren the lives of many of our patients are, and we look for all kinds of connections.

The CHAIRMAN. Now, child care. We are suddenly realizing, and we are expanding child care. What are their responsibilities to the various ages? In the perfect world, what would they do and whom would they report to, or how do we make sure this child gets help along the way?

Ms. Snow?

Ms. SNOW. In an ideal world, the licensing procedure for early childhood environments would focus more on the language, literacy and cognitive stimulation of those environments and, without ignoring safety, nutrition and health, would recognize that it is unhealthy for children to be in group care environments where the adults dealing with them are not informed about how to support their language development, how to support their cognitive development and their literacy development.

It would be recognized that these are educational environments just as much as the primary grades of public schools are educational environments. We need to think about expanding kindergarten downward, expanding professional educational delivery to children down to 4-year-olds, even as we are ensuring that one-year-olds, 2-year-olds and 3-year-olds are in early childhood environments that give them the language skills and the understanding about literacy that will ensure that they will benefit from pret-

ty good reading instruction, without having to ensure that they all have excellent, very best reading instruction.

The CHAIRMAN. And where do they get their help from, the child care people?

Ms. SNOW. Well, child care, as you know, is organized in a very disorganized fashion. Child care is delivered through all sorts of different mechanisms. What could be done is a professionalization of the early childhood providers and organized systems of delivery of professional development where the organization of child care will continue no doubt as it is currently organized, with a mix of private and publicly subsidized and Head Start and of Federal, State and local subsidized delivery. But what could be centralized usefully is the availability, the provision and the requirement for professional development for these early childhood providers.

The CHAIRMAN. When we get into school, kindergarten, what is the perfect system there when you get a child that needs help?

Ms. PODHAJSKI. Well, there are currently models for early childhood training for both child care providers and the child's first teacher, be it a parent, a kindergarten teacher or a child care provider, and I think we need to extend the speech-to-print continuum so that oral language can be related to print by exposing children to books, but also teaching them how the language works, how concepts of print are available in text, how words have meanings, and how these words are convertible to sounds that they can rhyme, sounds that they can add to, and sounds that they can have an enormous amount of fun with even in kindergarten.

The CHAIRMAN. Dr. Lyon?

Ms. Lyon. And we have got to close the gap between what we know—admittedly, not enough, but what we know—and how our teachers are prepared. I cannot stress that enough. Reading is not a romantic process until you get to read; then it becomes wonderful and fun.

Again, we know a good deal about the acquisition process. Few of our teachers have those kinds of concepts well-ingrained, and it is primarily because of some of the issues we have talked about, the philosophical battles that have distracted the training enterprise from actually teaching teachers to understand what it takes to learn how to read. And I think just pervading your question from birth into school is what does it take for a kid to learn how to read; what do they need to know; how does it become fun. And we know a lot about that, but we still have this hefty lacuna between what we know and what our teachers know—and that is not their fault—believe me, I am not banging on teachers. They make more decisions than an air traffic controller. They are basically put at risk because of either the shortness of duration of their training, or because some things have distracted the training process, the philosophical kinds of things.

I think that is going to be the major contributor to literacy in addition to all of the early—when we are talking school, at all levels, we are talking preparation.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much. We could go on all day, but there is another panel coming up. I appreciate your input very, very much and thank all of you.

The first witness on our next panel is Charles Bunting, chancellor of Vermont Stage Colleges in Waterbury, VT. The next witness is Dawnna Lanctot, a Community College of Vermont student who is from Danville, VT. The purpose of having these witnesses today is to let you know how wonderful Vermont is.

The third witness will be Peggy Minnis, who is program coordinator for the DC Head Start Toyota Family Literacy Program in Washington, DC, and Raynice Brumfield, a participant in the DC Head Start Toyota Family Literacy Program in Washington, DC.

We also welcome Noel Gunther, who is director of the WETA Learning Project in Arlington, VA, and Janet Arnowitz, who is a teacher in the Fairfax County Public Schools who resides in Bethesda, MD.

We have an excellent panel, and I am looking forward to all the testimony.

Chancellor Bunting, please proceed.

STATEMENTS OF CHARLES I. BUNTING, CHANCELLOR, VERMONT STATE COLLEGES, WATERBURY, VT; DAWNNA LANCTOT, STUDENT, COMMUNITY COLLEGE OF VERMONT, DANVILLE, VT; PEGGY A. MINNIS, PROGRAM COORDINATOR, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA HEAD START TOYOTA FAMILY LITERACY PROGRAM, WASHINGTON, DC; RAYNICE BRUMFIELD, PARTICIPANT, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA HEAD START TOYOTA FAMILY LITERACY PROGRAM, WASHINGTON, DC; NOEL C.R. GUNTHER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, WETA LEARNING PROJECT, ARLINGTON, VA; AND JANET ARNOWITZ, BETHESDA, MD, TEACHER, FAIRFAX COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Mr. BUNTING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for this outstanding day, focusing on what is perhaps our biggest challenge as well as our biggest opportunity to make a difference and to bring children to the point of reading well and reading independently.

I have heard it said that States, in planning for the future demand for incarceration, for prison capacity, look at third grade reading scores. But we could also turn that right around and say that those same third grade reading scores will help us plan for the demand for college education and for high-skilled jobs, indeed, even for voting booths in our democracy.

I am here to talk about what has thus far been a very successful effort at bringing new talent and new energy into this process of helping young children learn how to read, to talk about the America Reads Program in Vermont, and additionally, I would like to make a couple of points about the pending legislation that you are beginning your process with here as well.

The higher education component called American Reads was really initiated and announced by President Clinton only 15 months ago, in January 1997. It is a very simple concept which is to take the existing resources and vehicle of the college work-study program and apply it to working with young children on reading, by taking the work component that those college students are utilizing to work with young children in tutoring roles.

Frankly, some small incentives were put in place to encourage this process, but I think it was really, frankly, more of the concept

and the opportunity to get involved with this very essential need as well as the upswelling of commitment and interest in community service that brought so many students into this process, and I think that for once, Washington did get it right in terms of this particular interesting strategy.

The five colleges of the Vermont State Colleges enroll 10,500 students in a very rural State. We signed up very early to participate in the America Reads Program, for three reasons—first, the growth in interest in community service; second, our recognition that we really need to be talking about education at all levels, K to 16 education at least, and to all of our learners at whatever level of education we are talking about; and finally, that early literacy was already a major priority for other elements of the State of Vermont, indeed for the State itself.

Our partners in literacy, some of whom you have heard from today, including those from the Stern Center, Dr. Podhajski, took a very key step with us a few weeks after we announced our interest in getting involved with America Reads. All of the experts, the research experts and others, in literacy in Vermont got themselves organized and came and knocked on our door at the Vermont State Colleges. They had three simple and brilliant messages.

The first was welcome the cause. The second was we need you and your students. The third was you need us to do it right. That began a process of collaboration which continues to this day, which has made all the difference to the effort.

We arrived early through this collaboration at three key decisions—first, that we wanted our students to have more impact than as tutors, more impact than just reading with children, however valuable that is; but second, for that to happen, training was absolutely essential, and so we put in place a required training component which itself was developed by that collaboration of researchers and other experts in the reading field; and third, that we would evaluate and monitor the process with the students in order to then improve the process. And I might add that some of the aspects that Dr. Klass and others stressed are essential to our training approach. Every one of these so-called reading partners leaves his or her training with kits, with real books, which will eventually be owned by young children and now also by parents, as one key aspect of that process.

We are now completing our first year. Over the first year, 230 college work-study students and other volunteers, college staff and administrators who have also participated, have been trained and have been placed in up to 50 to 60 locations—most often elementary schools, but not only; also public schools, and there are some cases where public schools can be very active partners in my experience in Vermont in this process, also day care centers. Summer day camps are often a good opportunity, at least as they are found in the State of Vermont, and now, we are increasingly thinking about family literacy as well, as is reflected in your bill.

There are some other benefits from this process. There are anecdotes that tell us that students in engineering who get involved with this Reading Partners Program in Vermont are now thinking about education, perhaps, instead. I think another side benefit is

the way in which we might be attracting new talent to our classrooms in the future.

But the broader point is that there are a number of new allies that people who are committed to trying to strengthen literacy among young children have. As of today, 998 colleges and universities across the country are now involved after only 15 months, which is about one-third of all institutions in the country.

I was going to mention the pediatric network that has already been described to you, which is very active and effective in the State of Vermont. And there is an overall kind of philosophical point I would make, from the point of view of, say, those of us in higher education and other fields. You have really gotten our attention. Do not let us off the hook. And I think that that is something to think about in terms of getting more bang for the buck from the legislation that is before you.

Just two or three points about the pending legislation in front of you. I think that some things, you have got right in there in terms of, for example, the broad and diverse literacy partnership at the State level that is called for as a part of the legislation. However, having said that, I also think that there are perhaps some dimensions of this legislation currently that are a bit too complex. For example, it would call for the college work-study program to be putting priorities on certain specified schools within each State or within regions within the State. If you think about a State like Vermont, as rural as it is, that really gets very awkward and complicated when you think about the work and life schedules of people who are reading partners or tutors, at the same time carrying forward with complex programs.

We know that there are children in all schools who need this kind of help. We know also that indeed, in beyond schools, there are all kinds of other settings where we can reach children effectively. So I think there are some amendments and changes that might be made in the legislation to simplify it and also to put first things first. I would be pleased to offer some suggestions along those lines.

Finally, I would just comment that the colleges sand universities—at least, ours—are playing a very significant statewide role with our other partners in literacy. We are doing so by enabling the students who are participating can get help through the college work-study program. On the other hand, training is essential to make sure that they are able to play a role--they are not replacing teachers, but they are assisting teachers. And training is essential for them to be able to do that effectively.

There are some costs there. No such costs can be covered through the work-study program, and I think it would be useful to consider ways in which a modest amount of the appropriation that you are looking at in the future through this legislation might be allotted to really put that point centrally in terms of training, as you heard from so many of the other panelists a moment ago.

With that, I will simply close by saying that it is fine for me to be talking along these lines about the overall program, but I am very pleased now to turn to Dawnna Lanctot, who can tell it from the point of view of her own role as a reading partner in Vermont.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Bunting may be found in the appendix.]

The CHAIRMAN. Welcome, Dawnna. Please proceed.

Ms. LANCTOT. Thank you for this opportunity to share my experience as an America Reads Reading Partner.

I work approximately 20 hours per week in two different elementary schools with children in graders from kindergarten through third grade, and I see the impact that America Reads is having on these children.

I attended two different training seminars for America Reads, which I have found essential to my success as an America Reads Reading Partner.

When I walk in to the first grade classroom in the Danville Elementary School, all of the children immediately ask, "Can I read to you? Please, can I read to you?" It is a wonderful experience for me to see them so excited about reading out loud. For me as a child, reading out loud was very painful and something I never wanted to do, so it is wonderful to see these kids so excited to read out loud.

At Barnet Elementary School, my experience is a little different. I participate in the SURKUS Reading Club. SURKUS stands for Start Us Reading, Keep Us Reading. It is a book club that gives small rewards to the children for reading. For ten books read, they receive a small prize like a pencil or a bookmark. Again, there is excitement on the part of the children for receiving a price, but they are gaining reading skills. With 1 year of the book club being in place, Barnet's reading scores soared. In December of 1996, 9 percent of Barnet first-graders were exceeding the national standard for reading levels, and 1 year later, in December of 1997, 76 percent of the first-graders were exceeding that national standard.

I also have two children of my own; my oldest is 6-year old, and my youngest is 8 months old. I have found my training as an America Reads Reading Partner useful at home as well. My 8-month-old has already developed a love of books, and my 6-year-old is reading better every day.

For my 6-year-old, access to appropriate text for his reading level, as well as my guidance, have made the difference for him, as I think it does for many children. At Barnet School, the appropriate text is there for the kids and available to them, and in my training, I have learned how to help them select text which is appropriate for them.

Access to appropriate-level text as well as trained America Reads volunteers makes a difference in the lives of children, and I am grateful to be a part of it.

Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much. That is very helpful testimony. Congratulations.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Lanctot may be found in the appendix.]

The CHAIRMAN. Good morning to Senator Jeffords and members of this Senate committee and fellow panelists.

Our program is the District of Columbia Public Schools Head Start Toyota Family Literacy Program—it is a mouthful, I know.

It is located at two sites here in the District of Columbia, one at Moten Elementary and the other at Adams Elementary School.

In 1996, we received a 3-year grant from Toyota Motor Corporation through the National Center for Family Literacy in Louisville, KY, and this is our second year of existence. Our program is a quality, comprehensive, center-based program that empowers families and caregivers to become productive and literate citizens, positive parents, and/or proficient speakers of English, while providing their children with developmentally appropriate educational and social practices.

During our first year of existence, we proved that family literacy brings about success in the lives of families that we serve, and one of our success stories is sitting here beside me today, Ms. Raynice Brumfield. She was one of 49 adults that we had the privilege of serving last year. Her testimony to you will bear witness that literacy of parents is the key to empowering families, by not only launching them into self-sufficiency, but by helping them to become parents with positive parenting skills.

Parents with low levels of education often cannot obtain or keep jobs. What begins as an educational problem soon becomes a financial problem for the entire family. The financial problems of the entire family can easily lead to stress, dysfunction, physical and mental illness, or alcohol and drug abuse. All of these maladies serve as a breeding ground for sometimes fatal outcomes for family members.

To approach literacy through families is the best way to increase the educational levels of adults and children, because the approach expands the skills of both. It draws on the power of the family to affect its own future.

Our Toyota Family Literacy Program has five essential components designed to work interactively to improve parents' basic literacy skills, their attitudes toward education, parenting skills, English proficiency, employability skills, and their children's literacy skills while developing the overall quality of parent and child relationships.

Parents come to school every day with their 3- and 4-year-olds. Parents escort their children to the Head Start classroom and then go down the hall, or right nextdoor, to the adult education classroom. Parents learn skills in various academic areas, from learning to read and write for the very first time to enhancing their reading and math or language skills, while others may be preparing to take the GED examination.

Parents are encouraged to set goals for their educational achievement, to design their own work plans and collaborate with their peers under the watchful guidance of the adult education and parenting instructors.

Meanwhile, parents feel comfortable knowing that their children are close by, participating in the Head Start Program.

Parents participate in parenting classes that offer a variety of topics for study and discussion, including child nurturing, managing and coping with child behavior, child development, self-esteem, time management, career options, sex education and drug education, to name a few.

Parents also learn workplace skills and communication, problem-solving, teamwork, conflict resolution, all of which will enable them to become self-sufficient through the acquisition of jobs. Parents leave their classroom and go into their children's classrooms to interact with each other through play and literacy activities like reading or telling stories. It is here that the parents fulfill their role as their child's most important teacher. Parents and children develop new interaction patterns and often a more positive and supportive relationship with each other.

Last year, we served 46 families. The average age of the adults was 28, the youngest being 17 and the oldest being 59. Fifty-two percent were African American, 25 percent Hispanic, and 2 percent were Asian. Fifty-six percent of the adults were unemployed, and 21 percent had incomes of less than $3,000, and the remaining were less than $6,000 a year.

After 8 months of instruction, both adults and children made significant gains. The Hispanic adults were able to speak and read and write in English at a much higher level. In fact, 17 of the 28 adults were able to secure jobs. All of the adults fulfilled their initial parenting goals, and the children made more than a year and 4 months' gain in language, logic, math and literacy skills. The African American population increased their ability to read, write and calculate by at least two grade levels. They showed a great increase in their ability to talk to their children's teachers, their attendance at school activities and volunteering in the school. Parents increased the number of time they read to their children from one or two times to 7 days a week.

Our program is a card-carrying program. All of our parents secure a library card; their children all have library cards, and they have library cards in one hand, but voter registration cards in the other.

The partnership between Head Start, the National Center for Family Literacy and the Toyota Corporation has made it possible to change and better the lives of families. We believe that through passage of legislation like the Reading Excellence Act, LEAs will receive subgrants that will allow family literacy programs such as ours to touch the lives of many.

I urge the committee to recognize the importance of the Reading Excellence Act and its attempt to create and expand partnerships. Any reading reform should encourage partnerships such as the ones that we have.

Raynice is here with us today because she is proof that these partnerships work. The Head Start, Toyota, and National Center for Family Literacy partnership brought Raynice into the program, but it was family literacy that kept her there and made her successful.

To emphasize the importance of family literacy in any reading reform undertaken by this body, specific attention should be paid to the Even Start expansion authorized in the Reading Excellence Act. The $10 million that the Act earmarks for grants to help implement statewide family literacy initiatives by coordinating existing resources can only result in more success stories. The expansion of high-quality family literacy programs that receive proper technical assistance and training and use accurate data based on

reliable, reputable research to evaluate the outcomes of the program are essential in the language of this legislation. For these reasons, I think family literacy should remain as part of any State reading reform effort.

I thank you for the opportunity to tell you about our program, and I would like to invite you to visit us at any time.

Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. That was very excellent testimony.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Minnis may be found in the appendix.]

The CHAIRMAN. Raynice, please proceed and gives us your words.

Ms. BRUMFIELD. Thank you, Senator Jeffords and members of the committee, for inviting me to share my story with you.

By virtue of the fact that I can sit before you to take part in this occasion proves that without a program like the Toyota Family Literacy Program, I would still be just stuck in the house, taking care of my two small children, faced with a future that did not look bright.

I am a 26-year-old single parent with four children—James, 11; Delonte, 9; Kiara, 5; and Tyrone, age 5. I was born in Washington, DC and attended the public schools there.

When I was 15 years old, I became pregnant with my first child. Between the ages of 15 and 17, I worked at various jobs. I soon found that I could not make enough money to afford food, clothing, baby supplies and living expenses. At age 17, I became pregnant with my second child. By 19, I enrolled in one of the District of Columbia's public vocational schools. I dropped out of that school because the staff was not sensitive to the needs of young mothers, and I did not feel safe in that environment.

I started to receive public assistance when I was 19, and soon became pregnant with Kiara, and the next year, Tyrone.

I always knew that an education was the only way that my children and I could someday escape the poverty in which we lived. I wanted to provide my children with the opportunities I never had, so I enrolled my two youngest children in the Head Start Program at Moten Elementary, where my two oldest children attended. It was the Head Start teacher and the team of family service workers in Head Start that immediately began to execute the mission of empowering my family.

They told me about Head Start's new Toyota Family Literacy Program. They explained how this program would allow me to continue my education with other parents like me who had not received their high school diplomas. They encouraged me to enroll in the Family Literacy GED Program. They told me that if I enrolled, I could learn positive parenting skills and have the opportunity to practice my new literacy and parenting skills with my own children right in their early childhood classroom.

The opportunity to further my education while being close to my children seemed like a dream come true. On September 30, 1996, my children and I started school. I was quiet, scared and very unsure of myself.

When I entered the program, my reading and math levels were at second grade level. The staff made the other parents and me feel like we could accomplish anything. They made sure that we main-

tained a positive self-esteem. We were encouraged to set goals, and they helped us work to meet each goal.

The work was hard, but soon it became a daily routine for my children and me to sit at the kitchen table, learning together. As my reading skills improved, I began to enjoy reading stories to my children at home and going into their classroom to practice and share my new skills with any child who wanted to crawl into my lap to hear me read.

The harder I worked, the easier it became to help my older children with their homework. I began taking part in the activities at their school. My children's home library grew from two or three books to over 40. Reading and telling stories to my children has helped in their language development and provided me with practice in reading.

The parenting course helped me understand child development. Understanding the stages that my children were going through helped me to be patient, understanding and able to predict their behavior.

I learned that there are whole new worlds that my family and I can explore for free. We visit these new worlds every weekend inside the public library. I tell my children that even though we do not have a lot of money, we can still visit faraway places and people.

Most important, we enjoy these adventures as a family. All of my children have their own library cards, and I have become a responsible citizens with a voter registration card, and I vote.

As a result of being in the Toyota Family Literacy Program, new worlds have opened up for my family and me. Worlds that were once just part of my day dreams are now a reality.

I am proud to tell you that I now read on a 10th grade level, and my math skills have increased to a 9th grade level. I received an award from my children's school which honored me as being "Most Active Parent in Schoolwide Activities." I have volunteered more than 200 hours in my children's school. My children's report cards and teacher comments are no longer negative, but positive.

I was invited to speak at last year's 27th Annual Congressional Black Caucus Legislative Conference by New Jersey's Representative Donald M. Payne. I shared how Toyota, through the National Center for Family Literacy and the Head Start Program, are helping to improve literacy in the African American community by focusing on young children and their parents.

I was invited to Louisville, KY to be a guest speaker at the Seventh Annual Conference of the National Center for Family Literacy just last week. I had the experience of leaving Washington, DC for the very first time and flying on an airplane for the first time. The pilot of that airplane was a woman. You can imagine how this drove home the fact that I can do anything with education and an opportunity.

Literacy has broadened my horizons and given me a renewed sense of commitment to my life and the lives of my children. My adult education teacher encouraged me to apply for an intensive training program through the YWCA's Nontraditional Jobs for Women Program last school year. I was accepted into the program

and have completed the training, which prepared me to be trained as a carpenter, plumber, mason or electrical worker.

I just took the GED test on April the 16th. Upon notification of having passed the GED, I have been promised priority consideration for a nontraditional job at George Washington University through an agreement between our program and the university. I will have the opportunity to work for no less than $12 per hour, have paid leave and benefits for my entire family. I will gain experience, meet new people and, most importantly, have the opportunity to continue my education free-of-charge. Upon advancement in my job, my children will be able to attend George Washington University and get their college education free.

The partnership between Head Start, the National Center for Family Literacy and Toyota have made my future look bright. If you pass the Reading Excellence Act, other families will be able to experience success and have hopes of a brighter future, like me.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you for very moving testimony. It certainly is a success story, and it lifts our hearts.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Brumfield may be found in the appendix.]

The CHAIRMAN. Senator Warner, whom I am very pleased to have on my committee, I would ask you to introduce our next speaker.

Senator WARNER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I certainly want to join you, and I am sure my colleague Senator Reed, likewise, in saying that that was a beautifully delivered statement—and I have been here for 19 years, listening to these statements. I do not know about the chairman—he might have a few more years. But you can point with great pride not only to the content but to the manner in which you delivered it, and its results in lifting all of us a little bit, as if may be we are doing something worthwhile. We congratulate you.

Ms. BRUMFIELD. Thank you.

Senator WARNER. As a matter of fact, Mr. Chairman, I intend to get a copy of that statement and incorporate it in the record of the proceedings of the U.S. Senate today and have it printed.

The CHAIRMAN. I would like to join you in that.

Senator WARNER. I will see that that is done, and I will incorporate Senator Reed's name in it likewise.

Ms. BRUMFIELD. Thank you.

Senator WARNER. And guess what—we will get it framed, and you can put it up on your wall.

Now, Mr. chairman, it is my pleasure to introduce two of our distinguished citizens from Virginia. I have had the opportunity to meet with Mr. Gunther in my office. He is executive director of the Readline Project at WETA, as we call it, the public television and radio station here in the Washington area. He will discuss the Readline Project, a program that uses technology to promote literacy in children and adults. It is a very worthwhile program to which I certainly lend my hearty support.

I would also like to welcome Ms. Janet Arnowitz. I read through your biography and distinguished achievements. You are a teacher in the Fairfax County Public School System, and you are right on

the front line, right in the trenches, every day in special education. So we look forward to hearing from both of you.

Mr. Gunther, will you lead off?

Mr. GUNTHER. Thank you so much, Senator Warner and Mr. Chairman.

I have some prepared testimony, but I can really say in a word—I have only been here for about 19 minutes—but our project exists to serve parents like Mr. Brumfield and her children, and we hope that if this bill is passed, we will be able to serve many more people as a result.

I oversee the Readline Project at WETA, the public TV and radio station serving the Washington area. Readline will use TV, video, print and the internet to spread the word about the important new research that you heard described in the first panel. By using the media effectively, we hope to reach teachers, parents, tutors, librarians, day care providers, grandparents—anyone with a stake in helping children learn how to read.

As Dr. Lyon said, reading is an unnatural act. It is not like listening or speaking, which are pretty much hardwired into our brains. Reading has to be taught, it has to be practiced, and it has to be learned.

Congress has now appropriated more than $100 million for research on how kids learn to read and why they fail. Our job now is to use that research to help kids do better. I am here to talk about one part of the solution—public outreach.

We developed Readline under the leadership of WETA's president, Sharon Percy Rockefeller. Readline, if fully funded, will have five elements: a television program to be shown on public TV stations around the country; videotapes showing master reading teachers at work; one or more teleconferences to highlight our efforts to the educational community; the Readline web site; and a simple, jargon-free print guide pulling all these elements together.

We think public outreach is essential in achieving the goals of this legislation. First and most important, we need to reach the teachers. Some of them were trained years ago, before this research even began. Some of have pressed into teaching reading without much preparation. And many teachers, even the most conscientious ones, are so immersed in their daily work that they cannot easily sift through all the research to find what really works.

Reaching out to teachers is important, but we hope to do more. What about the parents who want to help their kids, but do not know how, or the Head Start specialists who work with preschool children, or the tutors who need more than good intentions if they are going to make a difference?

I was a tutor for many years, but looking back, I desperately wish I could have brought more knowledge to that job, because try as I did, I would have been a lot more effective with those kids if I had known some of the basic principles that Dr. Lyon and Dr. Snow outlined for teaching reading.

We think that by using TV, print, teleconferences and the internet, Readline can reach all of these audiences, and by working closely with expert partners and advisors, we can deliver reliable information to those who need it most.

In creasing Readline, we are building on a track record of success. I have spoken with a lot of foundation and Government officials, and over and over, I have heard the same message. They spend thousands or even millions of dollars conducting studies, producing reports, and even commissioning videos, but then their work sits on the shelf of a superintendent somewhere or gets buried in a big package of materials handed out at a conference.

We think we can help solve that problem, but we need a more creative approach. Our whole mission at WETA is using the media to reach people. I mentioned our track record. Readline is based on our successful experience in the field of learning disabilities. WETA has now become the leading media source of information about that field.

Our four TV shows on learning disabilities are watched over and over again. By the end of this year, several hundred thousand people will have seen those programs on TV. We have distributed more than 50,000 videotapes to schools and parents. One of our programs, the FAT City Workshop, has become the single best-selling program in the history of PBS video. I think that speaks to the need.

In 1996, we launched the LD OnLine web site, which has already become the leading web site in the field of learning disabilities. We are there 24 hours a day, whenever a parent or a teacher or a tutor or a student wants to sign on. LD OnLine now records roughly 250,000 page views and roughly 2 million hits each month. Recently, our usage has been growing at a rate of 30 percent every month.

We have learned a lot from the Learning Disabilities Project—lessons we think we can apply to Readline. We have learned how to work effectively with expert researchers like Dr. Lyon and wit partners like the Learning Disabilities Association of America, the American Library Association and many others. We have learned how to package information, how to translate research findings into plain, everyday English. And most important, we have learned how to create a community of parents and teachers and to help them work together.

Our "Ask the Expert" feature gives parents and teachers direct access to the leading experts in the world. We have had parents in Vermont posting questions at 11 p.m. and researchers in Iowa posting thoughtful answers by midnight. We have had kids write in, sharing their experiences, contributing stories and art. And every day, our users tell us how our programs and our web site are changing people's lives.

One woman recently wrote us: "I would give almost anything to stop even one kid from going through what I did. I still remember breaking my own arm to get out of going to school 1 day. I felt like that every day, and I broke my arm three times in 18 months. Something needs to change now, before another kid has to be that scared and confused. If anyone can do it, you can."

We hope to build on our experience and put it to work in providing the Readline service. I think we can make a big difference in helping more children learn how to read.

Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman, and now I would like to introduce Janet Arnowitz, who teaches at Lanier Middle School in Senator Warner's home State of Virginia.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Gunther and Ms. Arnowitz may be found in the appendix.]

The CHAIRMAN. Ms. Arnowitz, please proceed.

Ms. ARNOWITZ. Thank you.

Good morning, Mr. Chairman, Senator Warner. I have 20 years of teaching experience and have spent the last 210 years in the Fairfax County, VA school system. There is a 35 percent diverse population at my school. As an educator, I am here today to tell you that Learning Disability OnLine is the most comprehensive online community available for LD students, teachers and parents.

LD OnLine is a powerful resource and provides reliable information to those in need. I have used instructional reading strategies found on LD OnLine in my daily lesson plans. I have also discussed LD OnLine with entry-level special education and general education teachers.

Teachers need different strategies to accommodate the learning styles of their students. As a special educator, I frequently attend individual education program meetings with a team of parents and teachers. In those meetings, I discuss the value of LD OnLine as an informational tool. We also have a parent support group at my school and recommend LD OnLine as a resource for this group.

My students were very impressed with KidZone, a section of LD OnLine that displays artwork and stories. Verona, one of my more emotionally and learning-disabled students, wanted to submit her artwork to KidZone. This week, Verona's drawing is being displayed on the home page of LD OnLine and KidZone. Verona is so ecstatic about her artwork being displayed. This is a student who has poor self-esteem showing the whole classroom her work. The expression on her face was just incredible. KidZone has given Verona a sense of accomplishment. Teachers and students across the Nation can now view and admire her work.

LD OnLine is also a safe environment where students can feel very special.

Many educators and parents believe literacy is a biggest challenge in today's society. Students who have difficulty reading represent a cross-section of American children. By using the internet, Readline will reach and help people on a national scale. Readline will become instrumental in developing teacher in-services. Readline will also help disseminate information about reading to teachers and parents around the country.

LD OnLine has been a wonderful resource for me and my colleagues. I have seen what LD OnLine could do for my school system. I cannot wait to see the success of Readline.

Thank you, Chairman, thank you, Senator Warner.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, thank yon all for very helpful and excellent testimony. We have got to find those programs that we can replicate that will be successful, and your testimony has certainly given us much to think about in that regard as well as much hope, so I am pleased with my last panel for giving me some hope, because it is difficult, with all the need out there, to find out how we can have successful programs which will fill that need.

Senator WARNER. Mr. Chairman, if they can be found, you are the man to do it.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

We are going to have to close the hearing now, and I will explain to you why. My reading partner is waiting for me over at school, and I do not want to hold it up for too long. But I will be in touch with all of you to try to make sure we can figure out how to utilize the funds that we have in this bill to duplicate and replicate your successes.

Thank you all.

[The appendix follows.]

APPENDIX

STATEMENT OF CONGRESSMAN GOODLING

Mr. Chairman and other Members of the Committee, I am pleased to testify here today to discuss what I consider one of the most pressing problems facing our nation: illiteracy. But I am here with good news. The problem can be effectively addressed.

As a former educator, I have been concerned about the problem of illiteracy since first coming to the House of Representatives. I know you, Chairman Jeffords share my concern in this area.

During my times as an educator I saw the horrible impact of illiteracy on the lives of those who could not read or read well and their families. Unfortunately, I still see the same problems today: welfare, criminal behavior, unemployment, and a cycle of illiteracy, which prevents children from ever reaching their full potential.

Today, more than ever, it is important that each and every child receive a quality education. Today's highly technological society demands an even higher level of literacy and job skills than ever before. Today's student who leaves school unable to read and write, will have an even more difficult time providing for themselves and their family.

I testify before you today to tell you that H.R. 2614, the Reading Excellence Act, which passed the House of Representatives with strong bipartisan support, can effectively help us address the literacy problems facing our nation.

This bill was the outgrowth of President Clinton's "America Reads" proposal, which he announced during the last election. Unfortunately, his proposal was focused primarily on using volunteers to tutor children. While I believe volunteers can help children to develop a love of reading, I do not believe they could be effective as a well-trained classroom teacher. My view has support in the findings of the recent report by the National Academy of Sciences, "Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children." This report found that "volunteer tutors can help by reading to children, giving children supervised practice in oral reading, and creating opportunities for enriching conversation, but they are unlikely to be able to deal effectively with children who have serious reading problems."

I did, however, share the President's concern about the reading ability of our nation's children. Based on the findings of the National Assessment of Education Progress 1994 Reading Report Card, which found that 40 percent of students in the fourth grade were below the basic level of reading achievement, it is clear that the reading problems in our country must be addressed.

To explore this topic more thoroughly, my Committee on Education and the Workforce held three hearings last year which looked at current research on how children learn to read, the effectiveness of current federal reading programs and teacher training. Testimony presented at these hearings once again pointed to the fact that the real need was for well-trained teachers based on reliable, replicable research on reading, not volunteer assistance.

One of our witnesses, who had performed extensive research in this area, was Dr. Reid Lyon, Chief, Child Development and Behavior Branch, National Institute for Child Health and Human Development, National Institutes of Health. Dr. Lyon found that fewer than 10 percent of our nation's teachers have an adequate understanding of how reading develops or how to provide reading instruction to struggling readers. Less than two percent of our teachers have ever seen their professor demonstrate teaching practices with children of diverse skills in a systematic way. About 90 percent of our teachers have never had the theories they have learned on how children learn to read—the theoretical information—directly linked to providing reading instruction to a wide range of children. Other witnesses before the Committee indicated that many teachers only take one course in reading as part of their teacher preparation.

Based on information gathered at our hearings, we focused our bill on improving the ability of teachers to teach reading and to help insure all children learn to read as early as possible once they enter school.

Next, because there is limited funding available to carry out this legislation, we focused H.R. 2614 on Title 1 Schools in School Improvement. If this bill helps to improve the reading ability of children in these schools, which are in greatest need of assistance, we can be assured that it will work in Title 1 schools and other schools through the United States.

Another reason for focusing these dollars on Title 1 schools was poor performance of Title 1 students on the 1994 NAEP Reading Report Card. According to the 1994 NAEP date, the percentage of Title 1 students who performed below basic ranged from 59 percent at twelfth grade to 80 percent at fourth grade. Only about one-third

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or fewer of students across the three grades included in NAEP who were not Title 1 participants performed below the Basic level.

In addition to teacher training, H.R. 2614 also provides for the following important activities: transition programs for students who are not ready for first grade at the end of kindergarten; family literacy programs to help illiterate parents to become the child's first and most important teacher; and help for first through third grade students experiencing difficulty reading during non-instructional time throughout the school day, before school, after school, on weekends, and during the summer.

The bill also focuses on reading readiness skills. Local educational agencies that partner with Head Start, family literacy and other preschool programs receive a priority in funding. As you are probably aware, I strongly believe family literacy programs such as Even Start are an effective way to address the literacy needs of parents and children at the same time.

Finally, the bill provides for Tutorial Assistance Grants. Each State receiving a grant must use a portion of their funds to provide subgrants to local educational agencies for use by schools within Enterprise Communities and Empowerment Zones (or, in the case where a State has no such designated jurisdiction, Title I schools in school improvement). Parents with children who have reading difficulties and who attend these schools will have the opportunity to apply for tutorial assistance grants to offset the cost of sending their child to a reading tutor. Lists of eligible tutors are to be compiled by local schools.

We also heard from our witnesses, particularly teachers, that they did not have easy access to information on the most up-to-date information on reading. Therefore, H.R. 2614 requires the National Institute for Literacy to disseminate information on reliable, replicable research on reading to all recipients of federal education dollars, which are used, primarily for reading instruction.

H.R. 2614, also contains several important amendments to improve the Even Start Family Literacy Act. In addition, it contains modifications to the College Work Study Program to require institutions participating in the College Work Study Program to use two percent of their total College Work Study funds to compensate college work study students employed in literacy programs for children in preschool through elementary school, and family literacy projects. This will increase the number of students available to assist schools in helping children with reading.

Mr. Chairman, I believe the Reading Excellence Act will make major improvements in our current education program. We can no longer jump on each and every fad to teach children how to read. Generations of children suffer. California, for example, went to a "whole language" curriculum, with little evidence that it was more effective than phonics, and found itself at the bottom of the last reading survey.

Instruction and teacher training must be based on the most recent reliable, replicable research on reading, which currently indicates that a combination of phonemic sounds, phonics and whole language are needed to effectively teach children to read.

According to Dr. Reid Lyon, if we don't teach children to read by the end of third grade, they will never be able to catch up with their peers. We cannot afford to lose these children.

The Reading Excellence Act can help us reduce the number of children referred for special education services due to reading difficulties, help insure that our elementary and early childhood teachers have the skills they need to teach reading, and guarantee that each and every child will have an opportunity to succeed to the extent of their ability.

I encourage you to take early action on this legislation.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF BLANCHE PODHAJSKI

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee: I am Dr. Blanche Podhajski, President and Founder of the Stem Center for Language and Learning and Associate Clinical Professor of Neurology at the University of Vermont College of Medicine. I am pleased to have this opportunity to present to you information about the work conducted by the Stem Center over the past fifteen years not only to increase student literacy skills but also to provide our nation's teachers with the knowledge they need to prevent reading failure.

As a nonprofit literacy institution, we serve over 700 students each year and provide teacher training for over 1,000 educators. The Stem Center's goal has been to help public schools address the challenges posed by children who are not easily able to acquire basic language and learning skills. Isaiah is one such child whose work samples highlight his writing before and after ten months of explicit language instruction. Like Isaiah, many of our learners are not impeded by physical or emo-

tional handicaps, but rather do not learn to read because they fail to intuit how our language works.

How DOES the language work?

The language we read is the same language we speak. The difference is that one is represented through print and the other through speech. Children need to be taught the alphabetic principle: how speech maps to print or how the phonemes of our spoken language system systematically become represented through written spellings.

Ours is an alphabet of 26 letters that represents approximately 44 sounds. While this is not a one to one correspondence, 50% of our language is phonetically predictable and another 37% is usually phonetically predictable, making it possible for us to figure out 87% of the language if we are taught how it works.

Crossing the bridge from speech to print is easier for children with good phonemic awareness. These learners understand that spoken language can be broken down into smaller units—sounds or phonemes—and manipulated. Many youngsters encounter problems with phonemic awareness. Identifying which children these are and providing enjoyable activities to stimulate phonemic development are important to teaching id reading success. After children learn that abstract sounds constitute words, they must learn how to link sounds to letters—phonics.

Learning how the language works supports the ultimate purpose of reading: to extract meaning from print. Research studies supported by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) have offered compelling evidence about how deficits in phonemic awareness and acquiring the alphabetic principle hinder reading development. These skills will not develop without explicit instruction for many youngsters. And, unless young learners can develop accurate and rapid word reading, they will not be able to access the wealth of information and pleasure contained within books. Similarly, children with impoverished vocabularies, background knowledge and verbal skills will not as easily be able to derive meaning from what they read.

Just last month a panel of reading experts convened by the National Research Council reported that it is this very combination of abilities that young children need to possess to learn to read. Understanding the alphabetic principle, learning how to read fluently, using context to extend the meaning of words and being exposed to rich literature all contribute to our becoming a nation of lifelong readers. What has seemed common sense now knows the assurance of science. One size does not fit all and teachers need to be equipped with a variety of reading strategies to address the needs of emerging readers.

What is a balanced approach to reading instruction?

The reading wars are over. It is not a question of which is better, phonics or whole language. Rather, it is a question of how to achieve meaningful balance. Usually, balance suggests equal amounts of different things. When it comes to reading, some learners may need more of one than another. Otherwise, we will leave some students lost in the dust while others are bored to tears. Balance has another hazard. If teachers are to balance a myriad of reading strategies, they need to know which child needs which approach. If they don't, we get a "smorgasbord effect" where much is sampled but not always compatibility with every learner's diet. We need to weigh our options thoughtfully and knowledgeably to achieve meaningful balance.

Why is it important to improve in-service instructional practices for teachers who teach reading?

Access to highly skilled teachers will be the key to whether all children learn to read. However, it has been well documented that personnel preparation for the teaching of reading is incomplete. Both preservice and inservice professional development programs must include information about how the language works, as well as an emphasis on comprehension and the provision of language rich environments.

A Model Professional Development Program for Educators: TIME for Teachers

It is this inextricable link between teacher knowledge and student literacy that is the foundation for the Stern Center's TIME for Teachers program. TIME is an acronym for Training in Instructional Methods of Efficacy. Initiated in 1995 to address the dual concerns of incomplete reading instruction and teacher preparation, TIME offers classroom teachers of students in the primary grades (kindergarten through third grade) an opportunity to extend their knowledge about how children learn to read and what they can do to tailor reading instruction to meet the needs of different Kinds of learners.

Receipt of a $625,000 six year grant from a private Vermont foundation has allowed us to provide public school teachers with a robust professional development

program at no cost to them. TIME contains two important elements: an intensive, 35 hour course of didactic study in how the language works and how it supports extracting meaning from text; and a year long mentorship whereby teacher participants have access to teacher mentors to facilitate application of new learning in the classroom.

TIME FOR TEACHERS COURSE OBJECTIVES

Teachers will understand

1. Basic relationships between speech and print
2. How to assess phonological awareness
3. How to teach phonological awareness
4. Characteristics of children vulnerable for reading failure
5. Levels of phonological development through analysis of children's reading and spelling errors
6. Different reading instructional programs across a continuum of phonology explicitness
7. Structured language activities including: syllable types; rules of syllabification; structural analysis; spelling rules; and reading words in text
8. How to assess and teach phonics concepts within authentic text

In order to help teachers generalize course objectives within the classroom, yearlong mentorships were made available to each teacher participant. Mentor teachers experienced in teaching how the language works provided onsite assistance through discussion, observation, demonstration teaching, and team teaching.

TIME FOR TEACHERS MENTORSHIP OBJECTIVES

Teachers will be able to

1. Administer one or more phonemic assessment measures to at least three children
2. Use phonemic assessment data to plan one or more lessons for an individual student, small group of students or large group of students
3. Analyze students' spelling to better understand their phonological development
4. Develop an activity for at least two of the following areas: a) rhyming, b) segmentation, c) sound manipulation, d) blending, e) letter-sound awareness
5. Develop at least two structured language activities for the classroom
6. Demonstrate at least one lesson whereby structured language skills are generalized from controlled readers to literature

Now at its midpoint, 332 classroom teachers as well as 309 related school personnel, such as special educators, administrators and paraprofessionals, have participated in TIME. 93% believe that this kind of professional development should be made available to all primary educators.

The most frequently heard reaction to training have been queries from participants as to why this information about how the language works had not been available to them in their undergraduate and graduate teacher preparation programs. Teacher participants appreciate that this new language learning is designed to augment rather than supplant classroom reading instructional programs already in place. They report feeling empowered to use this knowledge in their regular classrooms as well as to collaborate more effectively with reading specialists, special educators and speech language pathologists working with their students. As a consequence, the number of students referred to special education due to reading difficulties may be reduced and special education resources can be more appropriately targeted towards students in need of more intensive services because of genuine reading disabilities.

To determine the benefits of this professional development initiative as it impacts literacy through classroom instruction, a pilot study evaluating data from the first year of TIME has been conducted. Almost 1,300 students in 67 classrooms participated in the first year of the project. All were first, second and third grade students from public schools throughout Vermont. Experimental groups were composed of students in classrooms in which the teachers received the TIME program; control classes were recruited from nonparticipating school districts. Because spelling has been considered a window to a child's knowledge of word reading and a sensitive indicator of literacy, an assessment of spelling which included a quantified analysis of errors was selected as a pre- and post-test tool.

Results from the TIME pilot study were significant. Student outcomes demonstrated greater gains on the spelling test scores for experimental than control groups across grades. It can be inferred that there is a stronger chance that children will achieve literacy when teachers have a better understanding of how the language works and how to incorporate this information within their classroom instruc-

tion. Teacher participants expressed how their views on reading instruction had changed as well:

What I learned from this experience was to be aware that even in second grade there are students who do not have the foundation in place to start this explicit instruction at the phoneme level. What Michael learned was how to read.

(Thompson, 1996)

TIME has had far reaching implications. In addition to Vermont, variations of the TIME program are being offered in northeast New York, Cornish, New Hampshire and Bridgeport, Connecticut. It has served as a model for Project RIME (Reading Instructional Methods of Efficacy), which was funded through a U.S. Department of Education grant at the University of Arizona.

TIME has also served as a catalyst for the development of a professional training program for childcare providers aimed at increasing critical early language and literacy skills among preschoolers. BUILDING BLOCKS is a two year training initiative supported by the Turrell Fund to provide children's earliest teachers with research based knowledge about essential pre-reading skills.

Let me share with you why we can wait no longer to disseminate this body of powerful reading research to our teachers. During one of the weeks when the TIME course was being presented last summer, a teacher participant received this note from her sixth grade paperboy:

You aer billed at $14.00 for the month. At every month [will colect at the first Friday. You can leave the monie out side caus I will pick it up between 6:00 and 7 pm.

6th grade newsboy

This young entrepreneur had typed it on his word processor for his customers. Limited literacy skills impact not only the acquisition of academic skills taught in the classroom but interfere with occupational success as well.

We are fortunate to be approaching the new millenium with knowledge that was not available to us a quarter of a century ago. We now know how children learn to read and why some fail. We can identify those who are vulnerable to prevent reading failure. But, to do so, we must empower our teachers with this knowledge. Literacy demands that both teachers and students know how the language works.

[Additional material may be found in committee files.]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF CATHERINE E. SNOW

Worries about whether America's children read well enough are not new. But today, the rising demands of a technological society have changed the definition of "adequate literacy." Reading well, fluently and with comprehension is essential in the U.S.—for entry to well-paid employment, for active participation in citizenship, and for access to the accomplishments of civilization.

The Committee on the Prevention of Reading Difficulties in Young Children, which I chaired, spent two years reviewing and synthesizing research on reading, in order to make recommendations to parents, educators, publishers, and others involved in the care and instruction of the young. We have examined a great deal of research, derived from several different fields of science and involving many kinds of evidence. Our goal was to produce an integrated picture of how children learn to read, and by extension, how reading should be taught.

Although overall literacy levels have not changed substantially since 1970, the educational careers of between 25 and 40 percent of all American children are imperiled because they do not read well enough, quickly enough, or easily enough in middle and secondary school. Moreover, reading problems occur disproportionately among certain groups of children, including those growing up in poverty, those attending schools in large urban systems, those who arrive at school speaking languages other than English,and members of English-speaking ethnic minority groups. As many as two-thirds of all black and Hispanic fourth graders read below acceptable standards, perpetuating unacceptable social inequities. Given the high levels of immigration and increasing numbers of children entering U.S. schools without a background in English, as well as the persistence of poverty across generations, it is imperative that we focus attention on preventing reading difficulties.

The negative consequences are high for children when we simply let reading problems emerge, rather than addressing potential sources of difficulty as early as possible. It is crucial that we address problems before children experience failure and before expensive supplementary services are needed. Many reading problems encountered by children in middle or high school could have been prevented had they been identified and dealt with before third grade. The Committee thus focused on the critically important period of birth to eight years old in considering research and evaluating the effectiveness of approaches to prevention. Major recommendations of

the committee addressed the issues of how to ensure excellent preschool environments and how to ensure excellent reading instruction for all children.

INSTRUCTION IN THE PRIMARY GRADES

Good reading instruction is the most powerful single tool in the prevention of reading difficulties. Unfortunately, controversies over how to teach reading have diverted attention from the most important factors affecting how a child learns to read. Individuals and institutions, including government agencies, must move beyond counterproductive debates and take the steps shown by research to be effective. One reason that conclusions concerning what constitutes good reading instruction have been fraught with so much conflict, has been the unrealistic desire for a simple answer. Reading is a complex and multifaceted outcome, determined by many factors. Ensuring adequate reading progress for every child in a heterogeneous group of first or second graders requires providing all of the many, varied experiences that will benefit their reading.

As depicted in Figure 1 (appended), children first learning to read need instruction that integrates information about the nature of the alphabetic writing system with a focus on reading for meaning, and frequent chances to practice reading skills. Slightly more advanced readers need to expand their knowledge of how the sounds of English are represented alphabetically, to learn how to monitor for comprehension, and they need sufficient practice with a variety of texts to achieve fluency.

Instruction in the alphabetic writing system in the early grades should include the following kinds of experiences:

Kindergarten instruction

practice with sound structure of words
recognition and production of letters
knowledge of print concepts
familiarity with purposes of reading and writing

First grade instruction

explicit instruction and practice with sound structures that lead to phonemic awareness
practice with spelling-sound correspondences and common spelling conventions and opportunities to use them in identifying printed words
"sight" recognition of common [frequent] words
independent reading, including reading aloud
use of a wide variety of well-written and engaging texts below the children's frustration level

Instruction For Children Reading Independently

encouragement to sound out and confirm the identities of visually unfamiliar words through attention to their letter-sound relationships

Writing

opportunities for children who know some letters to write words and sentences with use of invented spelling
instruction in conventionally correct spelling and insistence on the use of correct spelling for known words

Assessment

regular assessment of development to permit timely and effective instructional response to difficulty

Instruction in the art of reading for meaning should include the following sorts of activities:

Kindergarten and the Early Grades

stimulating verbal interaction to develop vocabulary
encouragement of discussions about books and about other topics designed to extend children's knowledge of topics they will be reading about
explicit instruction on strategies such as summarizing the main idea, predicting events and outcomes of upcoming text, drawing inferences, and monitoring for coherence and misunderstandings
support for daily independent reading of texts selected to be of particular interest to individual student (below student's frustration level)
support for daily assisted reading and rereading of texts that are difficult for the child in wording or in linguistic, rhetorical, or conceptual structure
promoting independent reading outside of school by such means as daily at-home reading assignments and expectations, summer reading lists, encouraging parent in-

volvement, and by working with community groups, including public librarians,who share this same goal

Assessment

regular assessment of comprehension to permit timely and effective instructional response to difficulty

In other words, three kinds of accomplishments characterize good readers: they understand the alphabetic system of English, they read for meaning, and they read fluently. Good instruction enables them to accomplish all these goals.

PRESCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS

Learning to read is a process that starts early in life. In order to benefit optimally from instruction in the primary years, children must arrive in first grade with a strong basis in the prerequisite language and cognitive skills, and motivated to learn to read. Children need high quality language and literacy environments in their homes and their out-of-home care settings. We recommend expansion of affordable, language-rich preschool programs. Those programs should support social, language, literacy and cognitive development, not focus narrowly on literacy alone.

The foundation of strong language and cognitive skills and literacy motivation with which children should arrive in first grade is depicted as the foundation for the cylinder in Figure 1. To build this foundation for reading instruction, home and preschool activities should include adults reading to children to stimulate verbal interaction and build vocabulary, activities like songs and word games that direct young children's attention to the sound structure of spoken words, and activities that highlight the relation between print and speech.

Families need affordable preschool opportunities that offer rich language and literacy environments. Especially as more children from lower-income families enter group care as a consequence of welfare reform, the preschool opportunities available to these families must support the ultimate development of literacy through linguistic and cognitive stimulation.

ADDRESSING RISK

Children at risk of reading difficulties because of hearing impairment, problems using language, or for other reasons must be identified quickly by pediatricians, social workers, and other early childhood practitioners. Early identification can help ensure their access to enriched environments during the preschool years. Therefore we recommend that organizations and government bodies should provide more information to parents, caregivers, and the general public about the way children learn to read.

Children with limited proficiency in English on arrival at school, as well as African-American and Latino children and children from poor neighborhoods or whose parents had difficulty learning to read, are more likely than others to have reading problems, though of course many children in each of these groups are successful. Given their increased risk of reading difficulties, it is advisable that such children be assured of excellent preschool environments and first-rate reading instruction. Quality reading instruction in the primary grades is the single best defense against reading failure,overcoming even the effects of childhood backgrounds that increase the risk of reading difficulties. Effective reading instruction requires that teachers focus on the relationships between letters and sounds, the process of obtaining meaning from print, and practice for fluency. Given the centrality of meaning in reading, it is advisable that children be taught to read in a language they understand, in which they can read for meaning. Ignoring any of these areas increases the risk that reading will be delayed or impeded. Schools with greater numbers of at-risk children should have extra resources to provide the instruction needed to prevent reading problems.

In addition, a small number of children without any obvious risk factors also have difficulties learning to read. Such children may require extra reading instruction and accommodations for their disability throughout their lives.

Professional development for early childhood and primary educators

Primary and early childhood educators bear an enormous responsibility for preventing reading difficulties, and often are insufficiently prepared for their task. Practitioners dealing with children under age eight need a greater understanding of how children learn to read, and primary teachers need ongoing professional development as well as continuing opportunities for mentoring by and collaboration with reading specialists, so they can continually improve both their knowledge base and their practical skills.

A well-designed classroom reading program delivered by a competent teacher can bring most primary grade students to the levels of reading proficiency expected of students in those grades. But too many teachers do not have the training and skills needed to teach reading effectively. State certification requirements and teacher education curricula should be changed to ensure that all teachers understand how literacy develops in children and the role of instruction in optimizing that development in diverse groups of students. These requirements need to incorporate key concepts about reading, for example, the importance of children's experiences with print and language, of vocabulary, and of phonemic awareness.

Local school officials need to improve their staff development opportunities, which are often weakened by a lack of substantive, research-based content and systematic follow-up. Teachers need professional development that spans their training and careers to address reading instruction needs. In addition, every school should have access to a variety of reading specialists who can work with classroom teachers in ways that develop their capacities as teachers as well as directly with children, to ensure optimal instruction

READING SPECIALISTS AND SPECIAL SERVICES

Schools that lack or have abandoned the use of reading specialists should reexamine their need for them and provide the functional equivalent of these well-trained staff members. These specialists' roles should be designed to ensure an effective two-way dialogue with regular classroom teachers. Volunteer tutors can be helpful in giving children practice in reading for fluency, but are unlikely to be able to deal effectively with children who have serious reading problems.

Because success in reading builds on the same skills for all children, we do not believe that children who run into difficulty need qualitatively different instruction from other children. Instead, they may need more focused, more intense, more responsive, and more individual application of the same principles. Ideally any special services they receive will be integrated with already high-quality classroom instruction, rather than introducing a different set of procedures.

Because reading requires access to meaning through understanding the connection between speech sounds and letters, initial reading instruction for children who do not speak English is best carried out in the child's home language-the language in which meaning is accessible. We recommend that if reading instruction in the child's home language is not feasible, then the child should be given an opportunity to develop a reasonable level of oral proficiency in English before reading instruction begins.

CONTRIBUTIONS OF RESEARCH

Several issues warrant ongoing attention from researchers. Better assessment tools are needed to determine when children have reached reading goals, when they require extra help, and when their difficulties have been overcome. In addition, educators need better guidance on how to design literacy instruction for students with limited or no English proficiency, the effects of holding students back a grade to prevent reading difficulties, and the specific attributes of effective classroom instruction and reading interventions.

CONSENSUS

However, remaining uncertainties should not delay the application of what is known. By building on the results of reading research, parents, teachers, policymakers, and others can help children achieve the levels of literacy needed for success in today's society. The committee I chaired was a large and diverse one, made up of 17 members with a wide range of perspectives on how to prepare children to learn to read and how to teach reading. In the end, even this diverse group was able to reach consensus on what the research demonstrates to be effective, and what should be done to implement it, and this consensus has since been endorsed by groups such as the International Reading Association, the National Council of Teachers of English, the American Federation of Teachers, and others. We provided a research basis for deciding which experiences are foundations for children's beginning reading instruction and components central for effective beginning reading instruction. We hope our report will mark the end of the reading wars, and the beginning of a focus on making the changes in American education that will ensure that even those children most at risk succeed in learning to read.

[Additional material may be found in committee files.]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF PERRI KLASS, M.D.

INTRODUCTION

I would like to thank the Chairman, Senator Jeffords, and the Raking Member, Senator Kennedy, and the members of the committee for this opportunity to testify. I appreciate being invited to add the perspective of a pediatrician on an issue which I believe is absolutely vital to the health and potential of my patients, and all pediatric patients—that is to say, to the health and potential of all the children in this country. My job, as their pediatrician, is to help my patients grow up healthy and to work with their parents to promote their safety, their full and happy development, physical, mental, and emotional.

Through our pediatric literacy program, Reach Out and Read, we are working to expand this pediatric definition of health and well-being to include literacy development as an essential component of child health. Through the existing structure of pediatric care, we can reach parents and children early and repeatedly to provide counseling and encouragement around issues of books and reading aloud, and in order to make the message real, to provide the books they need in order to grow up with reading.

As members of the Senate Committee given the task of drafting authorizing language for this legislation, you have a significant opportunity to influence the literacy skills of low-income children in the first years of life by earmarking funds for the purchase of books. As a pediatrician, I am here to talk about the vital importance of those books in the lives of infants, toddlers and preschool children. Using the Reach Out and Read network already established in community health centers, hospitals, and pediatric practices, we can already reach a million of the children who are most at risk for later reading failure. With your support, we can move rapidly and efficiently to extend our reach and serve the five million children under the age of six who need this intervention most.

I am a pediatrician, a 1986 graduate of Harvard Medical School. I did my pediatric internship and residency at The Children's Hospital, Boston, and did further subspecialty training in pediatric infectious diseases at Boston City Hospital; I am Board Certified both in Pediatrics and in Pediatric Infectious Diseases. I am a Fellow of the American Academy of Pediatrics, for which I serve as a media spokesperson, and a member of the Pediatric Infectious Diseases Society of America. I have also written extensively about medicine, both for a medical audience and for the general public; I have published two books about medical school and residency training, and numerous articles and essays in venues ranging from The New York Times Magazine, where I most recently published an article on managed care last September, to Parenting Magazine, for which I serve as a Contributing Editor. And, as writers will, I am here to speak to you about books—and, given the setting, I will start by quoting Thomas Jefferson, who once wrote to John Adams, "I cannot live without books."

The Reach Out and Read program was founded at Boston City Hospital in 1989 by a group which included pediatricians, Drs Barry Zuckerman and Robert Needlman, and early childhood educators, Kathleen Fitzgerald Rice, MSEd, along with nurses and clinic 5taa'. I became connected with the program in 1993, and now serve as Medical Director; over the past five years, I have been involved in the rapid expansion of Reach Out and Read, and in many details of training pediatricians and developing materials to help make the promotion of early literacy a standard part of pediatric care.

In addition to my work with Reach Out and Read, I continue to practice primary care pediatrics half-time at a neighborhood health center, Dorchester House, in Boston, which serves an inner city urban population, and to work in pediatric infectious diseases at Boston Medical Center, including work with refugee and immigrant children in the International Clinic. My work with Reach Out and Read has allowed me to bring together my interest in the health and development of children, my commitment to the well-being and potential of children in underserved populations, and my love for language, books, and the written word. I am honored and delighted to be here today speaking to the Committee.

THE HISTORY OF REACH OUT AND READ

In 1989, the idea for ROR came out of the work of the Child Development Project, an educational/medical collaboration within the Division of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics at Boston City Hospital (now Boston Medical Center). This project joined early childhood specialists and pediatricians together to provide comprehensive services to children living in poverty.

ROR began as a waiting room program for parents and children who were waiting for long periods of time. Volunteers were recruited to read to the children in the waiting room, and talk to the parents about sharing books with their children. Early on, it was clear that the children were interested in the books and the parents intrigued by their children's behavior. From the very beginning, it was thus evident that the books themselves were essential to the success of the intervention, that the books indeed carried a certain talisman-like promise of the opportunities of literacy and the joys of the printed page, and that in the on-going relationship between pediatrician and parent, we had an excellent opportunity to get books into the home during the first few years of life.

REACH OUT AND READ: THE MODEL

Reach Out and Read has three basic components. The program is designed to take advantage of the already existing structure of pediatric primary care, in which parents of young children have repeated, one-to-one, developmentally focused visits with pediatricians during the first years of every child's life. There are many incentives to make and keep these appointments, ranging from the strong interest most parents feel in seeing their children grow up healthy to the WIC requirement that all immunizations be up to date.

Even without any illnesses or special concerns, children routinely see their doctors for checkups nine to ten times between the age of six months and five years. For many families, and especially for families in poverty, these are the earliest (and often the only) regular contacts with a professional trained in child development. Parents bring many questions about development and behavior to these appointments, and pediatricians routinely devote a substantial part of their health supervision visits (that is, check-ups, well-child visits, primary care) to what is called anticipatory guidance, discussing developmental issues that lie immediately ahead and counseling parents about how to help their children stay healthy and developmentally on track.

The three components of every Reach Out and Read program are:

Trained volunteers in the pediatric waiting areas read aloud to the children while they and their parents wait for their appointments, showing parents that their children enjoy books and enjoy being read to, and modeling techniques for reading aloud.

Pediatricians are trained to promote literacy in children, and while in the exam room give parents concrete advice on books and how to use them effectively with their children (including strategies for parents with low literacy skills). For example, pediatricians talk about pointing at pictures and naming objects in books when they are talking about the importance of talking to babies before they can talk, and about language development in general; they discuss the importance of reading to children at bedtime in the context of counseling the parents of toddlers about sleep patterns and bedtime routines.

The pediatrician gives a child a new book at each well-baby or well-child visit. There are 10 such well-child visits from 6 months-5 years thereby allowing the pediatrician multiple opportunities to reinforce this message, while tailoring the specific advice to the child's age and developmental stage. Babies like to look at pictures of babies can be given as anticipatory guidance accompanied by a board book (suitable for chewing on) with pictures of babies' faces. The parents of a two-and-a-half-year-old can be told that toddlers like repetition—and the child takes home The Very Hungry Caterpillar, a book which relies on repetition, and concerns a subject very near to the heart of every two-year-old: eating and eating and eating. The average cost per book is $2.50, so the cost of the program is $25 per child spread over five years.

The three components of Reach Out and Read build on this already well-established structure of pediatric primary care, by making the promotion of emergent literacy skills an integral part of these health supervision visits, and by offering modeling and encouragement to parents to help them read to their children. The pediatrician, who provides the anticipatory guidance about books and reading, is a well-known and well-respected figure in the family's life, and can provide this advice in the context of other vitally important issues such as health, nutrition, and safety.

Most important of all, by sending children home with books, and their parents with the knowledge to make the best use of them, Reach Out and Read makes sure that the essential tools for reading and the development of early literacy skills are present in every home—through the Reach Out and Read program, there are nine to ten children's books in every child's home before the child starts kindergarten. And as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the creator of Cherokee Holmes, wrote, "It is a

great thing to start life with a small number of really good books which are your very own."

REACH OUT AND READ: NATIONAL EXPANSION

In 1993, ROR received a three-year grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation to pilot replication of the success of the ROR program and to develop the tools for national replication. Since then ROR has developed programs at more than 200 sites nationwide, serving more than 600,000 children every year. ROR addresses the national recognition that brain development and learning require the attention of the parents of young children. On April 16,1997, The First Lady announced a national initiative to prescribe reading to infants and children called in prescription for Reading", encouraging all pediatricians and health care providers to participate fully in the effort to teach parents to read to their children. ROR has become a cornerstone of this collaborative effort, which joins several groups, public and private, for-profit and non-profit, with the goal of expanding ROR to reach many more children across the country.

One noteworthy goal of this developing partnership is, by working with the National Association of Community Health Centers (NACHC), we have launched an ambitious effort to bring ROR to 400 community health centers, reaching one million more preschool children by the year 2000. Through this collaboration ROR seeks to address the particular needs of community health centers in their efforts to start ROR programs. The response from the health centers has been remarkable, with well over 100 health centers already funded. The community health centers in this country serve nearly 2.5 million preschool children, all from low-income families. We hope to reach 500,000 of them through the health centers alone by next year. Once again, the limiting factor is books, and funding for books.

Reach Out and Read is also collaborating with the National Association of Children's Hospitals and Related Institutions, targeting teaching hospitals and pediatric residency programs in order to train the pediatricians of the future, who will routinely incorporate literacy into their pediatric primary care practices. We have strong commitments from the American Academy of Pediatrics to institutionalize this change in the culture of pediatrics, and the Health Supervision Guidelines for pediatricians, which set standards of care for what needs to be covered in routine visits, have already been changed to include literacy promotion. Again, the books are the limiting factor; the support and enthusiasm is there on the part of resident physicians and faculty alike.

EMERGENT LITERACY: THE IMPORTANCE OF EARLY INTERVENTION

Other witnesses far more expert than I will testify (and have testified) to the serious problems of low literacy and school failure in this country. We know that the problems start early, and that the first years of life are critical for literacy acquisition; we know that teachers all over the country are struggling to meet the needs of children who come to school unprepared to learn how to read. As an addendum, I have included a summary of some of the essential studies of emergent literacy. Furthermore, other witnesses will testify (and have testified) to the mounting body of evidence linking the home literacy environment of young children to their later success as readers.

So we know the problem exists, and we know that children when they start school are already behind, and we know that reading to preschool children is vitally important. And yet, in a recent survey, fewer than 39% of parents report reading aloud to their children each day. And in fact, parents cannot read to their children unless there are books in their homes, and the children most at risk for reading failure are the children growing up without any books of their own. Children, including very young children, need books in their homes, books in their childcare centers, and later, books in their schools.

For a child to be reading, that child must be reading something; for a parent to read to a child, the parent needs a book. All the glorious small steps of emergent literacy require exposure to books, familiarity with books, engagement with books. For example, when I give out books to my six-month-old patients, I tell parents that I know what their babies will do with these bright new board books: the books will be chewed on, because that is how babies explore their world. A six-month-old does not care if a book is right side up or upside down, but a twelve-month-old who has been exposed to books will turn the book right side up. If there is an upside down picture in the book, however, a one-year-old will turn the book around and around, trying to make sense of it; a two-year-old, on the other hand, will have no problem getting the book right side up, while understanding that the picture is upside down.

Growing up with books, children initially acquire book handling skills, learning to orient the books, to turn pages, to choose a book and hand it to an adult to be read to. They learn picture reading skills, from the six-month-old who slaps at pictures to the one-year-old who can point when asked, "where is the baby, where is the dog?" And they learn story reading skills, filling in words in familiar texts, protesting when an adult gets a word wrong (as anyone who has ever read to a two-year-old will attest), and by the age of two and a half or three, "reading" familiar books to themselves. (Schickedanz—More Than the ABC's).

Neuroanatomical research has shown us that children reach their peak density of synaptic connections by the age of three, that this density is maintained until about the age of 11, and that there follows a period of "pruning," in which brain changes are directly related to experience and stimulation, and during which those tracts and pathways which are not used are most likely to atrophy. The toddler's craving for repetition, for hearing the same book over and over and over, long past the point of memorization, is analogous to the body-builder's repetitions in weight training; the child is asking for the kind of stimulation which will promote increased complexity of neuroanatomical development.

Without books in the home, young children miss out on all these skills, all this stimulation, and miss in addition the essential motivation, the awareness of books as sources of pleasure and information, the association of books with warm and loving periods of time spent with a parent—the motivation which is critical for children to have when, at school age, they undertake the essential drill in sound structure and phonemes which will result in the ability to decode print. It has been estimated that children who grow up in homes where reading aloud is a standard daily activity amass between 500 and 1500 hours of book time before they start formal reading instruction. These hours, one-on-one with a parent, focussed on written language and word play, are not hours that even the most dedicated teacher can put back, if they are missing.

But none of this can happen without books, books as early playthings, books as childhood familiars, books as part of every childhood. There are many barriers which keep children from growing up with books; parents may lack money, bookstores may be inaccessible (or nonexistent, in some communities), parents may not understand the importance of reading to young children, or may lack confidence in their own literacy skills or in their ability to choose books for their children. Parents need support and guidance from a variety of sources—but they also need the books.

In my own pediatric practice, I have seen on many occasions the power of a children's book, once it gets into the home. One parent told me that her eighteen-month-old daughter was so attached to the book I had given her at her checkup that the child followed her around the house, making her read the book again and again. The mother, in frustration, finally hid the book—and the child found it and continued to hand it to her mother, over ad over, until, the mother told me with a rueful smile, the book had been read so many times that everyone in the family knew it by heart, and it was held together with duct tape. Another mother told me that her two-year-old son had carried his book everywhere for days, taking it to bed with him at night-but only after she had read it through three or four times. Parents speak with amazement about the power of their children's attachment to books, and in the parents' pride, I see new hope for their visions of their children, their children's potentials, and their children's needs.

We have been astonished, both at my health center, and at other clinics, by the speed with which the children come to associate their health care with the new books they get to take home. Children three and four years old come into the exam room and demand, "Are you going to give me a book today?"—instead of every pediatrician's least favorite opening, "Are you going to give me a shot today?" At Dorchester House, we had a four-year-old boy come in to have sutures removed from his eyebrow; he promised to lie absolutely still if he could have a book, and in fact, he lay motionless on the exam table while someone read aloud to him the book he would later take home as his own. One doctor at Sage Memorial Hospital, on a Navaho reservation in Arizona, commented, "Next to the immunizations we give, ROR is the most important intervention we accomplish during the well-child visit."

An infrastructure for reaching the children most at risk exists—and works. Through national non-profit organizations such as Reading is Fundamental and First Book, books are distributed to children throughout the country. A growing percentage of these books go to preschool children (19% of RIF book distributions, and more than 60% of First Book), in recognition of the vital importance of the very early roots of literacy.

The pediatric health care infrastructure offers Reach Out and Read unique access to parents of young children during these essential early years, and therefore a unique opportunity for early intervention. Parents may be in the habit of going to

their local library, may not participate in parenting groups, may not read advice columns—but they still take their young children to be weighed and measured and immunized. In our waiting rooms, in our exam rooms, we have a chance to reach parents when their children are very young, to put books into the hands and homes of our patients, and to help their parents understand how to enjoy those books with their children. As parents see that their children like books, they will be much more likely to find their way to the library, to bring additional books into the home, and later on to support the efforts of their children's teachers.

Through cooperating publishers, books are available at extremely low cost; at Reach Out and Read, we estimate that our average cost per book is now about $2.50. Thus a "full course" of ten books given out at pediatric visits from six months to five years would cost about $25.00, and this would include new, carefully chosen and developmentally appropriate books, starting with chewable board books for a baby and moving up to more complex story books for a preschooler. We've got an effective model, committed partners and enthusiastic doctors. The only barrier to our ability to reach more children at risk is funding to expand this inexpensive intervention and support the efforts of teachers in kindergartens and first grade classes by sending them children who come from homes with books.

EFFECTIVENESS OF REACH OUT AND READ

Published research on the role of pediatricians was conducted by Drs. Zuckerman, and Needlman, 1991 in Boston, to evaluate the effectiveness of the ROR program after its first years of operation. They found that pediatricians are often the only professionals to have repeated, one-to-one contact with parents during their children's early years. Parents often turn to their pediatricians for advice about the needs of their infants and young children. Guidance about picture books and how they promote child development fits naturally into the structure of pediatric health supervision. Because of the regularity of contact, the close nature of the parent-professional relationship, and parental expectations to receive guidance, the pediatric health supervision visit is an ideal context in which to promote behaviors which support language and literacy development. Evaluation of a model pediatric clinic-based literacy support program has shown that book distribution by pediatricians is associated with an eight fold increase in reports by parents that their children enjoy looking at books among families receiving Aid for Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) (Needlman, Fried, Morley, Taylor & Zuckerman, 1991).

In an even more dramatic illustration of the success of the model, Dr. Pamela High, MD, Clinical Associate Professor of Pediatrics at the Brown University School of Medicine, Woman and Infants' Hospital and Hasbro Children's Hospital conducted a recent study to be published in the Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine. The study was designed to evaluate a program of anticipatory guidance in which pediatric residents and practitioners distributed children's books and other educational materials in their continuity practice. The study compared two cross-sectional groups of more than 150 families, including a Comparison coup of families that regularly attended continuity clinics, and an Intervention Cup with children 12-38 month olds who had received two books at all well-child visits.

The intervention was found to be effective in promoting child centered literacy activities, with 68% of the parents in the Intervention group demonstrating a child centered literacy orientation, as opposed to 33% of the parents in the Control group. The study concluded that "this simple and inexpensive intervention ... resulted in increased enjoyment of and participation in child centered book related activities in these low income families. Primary care providers serving underserved pediatric populations may have a unique opportunity to promote child centered literacy in these at risk groups."

It should be emphasized that these effects, for example a two or four-fold increase in the frequency with which parents report looking at books with their children, are very large by the standards of most medical studies. Generally, we are very pleased if medical interventions change behaviors or outcomes by 25-50%; the magnitude of the changes seen in these studies suggests that this simple intervention may be more powerful than anyone initially expected.

THE REACH OUT AND READ RESPONSE

Growing up healthy means growing up with books. Reach Out and Read makes early literacy part of every pediatric primary care check up. Recent research on early brain development confirms that stimulation to the brain during the first years of life make a critical difference in language and speech development. Research has shown that children who are read to are more likely to learn to read on schedule, and are therefore more likely to be successful in school.

We know what we need. We need parents to read to their children, we need children to have books. The promotion and support of emergent literacy skills in the first five years of life, the development of a love for books and a strong motivation for reading—these are what we owe our children, and also what we owe their teachers. Books in the home will help children grow up understanding how books work, and help them grow up associating books with pleasant times, with interesting windows on a wider world. And this will support the hard work of the teachers who must take those early literacy skills and channel them into the challenge of becoming truly literate, of learning to decode the printed page.

This legislation you are crafting must support the early acquisition of books, and the books must be given along with help and advice so that parents and children will enjoy them together. When we succeed in supporting parents, and they succeed in supporting their children, then those who are working to teach reading to school-age children have children to teach who are ready to learn, and even eager to learn. Books in the home, staring at a very early age, may be the most important thing we can do to support teachers' later work in the schools.

Through Reach Out and Read and its national partners, a system is already in place, targeted to get books into the homes of the children most at risk for reading failure; through pediatricians, we have an opportunity to communicate regularly with parents, and to set literacy in its rightful place as an essential component of child health and development. Because we have the infrastructure, because we have the experts and the opportunity to educate parents, we need to spend money now on books, so that children, as they leave the doctor's office, carry with them both the message and the medium, both the hope and the opportunity.

Dr. Barry Zuckerman, a founder of the Reach Out and Read program, now Chief of Pediatrics at Boston Medical Center, likes to say that he looks forward to a future in which giving out books will be as routine for pediatricians as giving shots. The truth is that while we all (especially those of us with training in pediatric infectious diseases) acknowledge the importance of immunization, none of us enjoys causing small children pain and seeing them cry. Books give me a chance to see children light up with smiles in my exam room, and also lets me see parents smile—at their children's enthusiasm, and also, I believe at the implied compliment. When you give a child a book, you are making a gesture to that child's future potential, as a reader, as a student, as a human being. As a pediatrician, when you give that book and accompany it with some advice about how to enjoy it, parent and child together, you are stating your faith in the child, and also in the parent's ability to help that child along. And when the child leaves the clinic, clutching the book, a small bright piece of possibilities goes home, even into the most desolate or deprived home.

Because after all, reading is the point—and I speak here as a writer and a reader as well as a pediatrician, and a mother too, for that matter-a mother some of whose proudest moments have come when I had to scold my own children: "For heaven's sake put down that book while you're tying your shoe!" "Were you reading under the covers again?" When children truly become readers, it is because they are caught by the magic of books; when adults keep reading it is because they have gone beyond simple fluency to that blessed state of reading in which every book is a doorway into a world.

As a pediatrician, I spend so much of my time trying to fend off various dangers, inoculating children, warning about safety hazards. Who a privilege, what a joy it is to offer a book; a stepping stone toward school and school achievement, an opportunity for parent and child to discover together some of the warmest and most wonderful moments of childhood—but also, possibly, an early intimation of all the magic and the irresistible allures of the written word, the printed page—of books, a lifetime of books. I look to you and to this legislation as an opportunity to put more books into more children's hands, more children's homes, more children's minds.

[Additional material may be found in committee files.]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF NOEL GUNTHER

Mr. Chairman, I'm Noel Gunther, Executive Director of the Readline Project at WETA, the public TV and radio station here in the Washington area. Joining me is Janet Arnowitz, a public school teacher from Senator Warner's home state of Virginia. We hope to use the media to spread the word about the important new research on reading. We hope to reach teachers, parents, tutors, school administrators, grandparents—anyone with a stake in helping children learn how to read. We're very grateful for the chance to testify before this Committee.

"Reading is an unnatural act," says Dr. Martha Denckla, one of the experts featured in the radio documentary we've given to the Committee. Reading is not like

listening or speaking, which are pretty much hard-wired into our brains. Reading has to be learned. It has to be practiced. It has to be taught.

But in our society, that unnatural act is the key to success in school. It's the key to a decent job. And it's becoming the key to having a decent life. As the Committee knows, an alarming percentage of our children are not learning how to read. According to the most recent National Assessment of Education Progress study, 44% of fourth graders—more than 2 in 5—are reading at a "below basic" level. That is a national crisis.

Congress knows how important this effort is. You've already appropriated more than $100 million for research at NIH and elsewhere about how kids learn to read and why they fail. The experts have found some answers. We have worked closely over the last few years with Dr. Reid Lyon and his colleagues at the National Institute for Child Health and Human Development. We are very encouraged by the promising results of the research conducted there and elsewhere.

Our job now is to use that research to help kids do better, to help more children learn to read more fluently. I'm here to talk about one part of the solution—public outreach.

Our project is called Readline. We've developed it under the leadership of WETA's President, Sharon Percy Rockefeller.

Readline, if it's fully funded, will have six elements:

A television program to be shown on public TV stations around the country.

Videotapes showing master reading teachers at work, using effective, research-based teaching methods.

One or more teleconferences to highlight our efforts in the educational community.

The Readline web site, featuring attractive graphics, detailed information, news in the field, experts answering questions on-line, audio and video clips, a national calendar, bulletin boards, and a guide for finding help.

A simple, jargon-free print guide pulling all these elements together.

Outreach to low-income schools and parents and to schools serving students with limited English language proficiency.

We will provide detailed information, video tapes, direct access to experts, and an opportunity to communicate on-line about what's working and what's not. And by doing that, I think we can play a big role in lifting the level of literacy among our children.

I think Readline can be a linchpin of the public outreach effort envisioned by the Reading Excellence Act. We strongly support the provision of the House bill setting aside $5 million for public dissemination of the important research findings. We respectfully ask the Senate to support that initiative. We also ask that Readline be recognized as being especially well qualified to deliver information to those who need it. To that end, we request that out of the $5 million reserved for public dissemination, Readline receive $2 million in FY 99 and such additional sums as may be needed in future years.

Public outreach is indispensable in helping achieve the goals of this legislation. First and most important, we need to reach the teachers. Some of them were trained years ago, before this research even began. Some teachers have been pressed into teaching reading without much preparation at all. And many teachers, even the really conscientious ones, are so immersed in their daily work that they can't easily sift through all the research to find what works. But even if every current teacher was perfectly equipped to teach reading, we'd still have a challenge ahead, because America's schools are expected to hire more than 2 million new teachers over the next ten years. (New York Times, Aug. 22, 1997) The U.S. Department of Education has estimated that 40% of the public school teachers will leave the profession or retire during the seven year period between 1996 and 2003.

Reaching teachers is essential, but we'd like to do more. What about the parents who want to help their kids but don't really know how? Or the grandmother who looks after her 4-year-old grandson every day and would love to help him learn to read? Or the Head Start specialist who works with pre-school children? Or the tutors who volunteer by the hundreds of thousands—but who need more than good intentions if they're going to make a difference? I was a tutor for many years, but looking back I desperately wish I could have brought more knowledge to the job. Because try as I did, I would have been a lot more effective if I'd known some of the basic principles for teaching reading.

Using television, print, teleconferences, and the Internet, Readline can reach all of these audiences. And by working closely with expert partners and advisors, we can deliver reliable information to those who need it.

In creating Readline, we're building on a track record of success. I've spoken with a lot of foundation leaders and government officials over the last year. Over and over I've heard the same message. They're enormously frustrated by the difficulty

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of actually reaching people. They spend thousands or even millions of dollars conducting studies, producing reports, even commissioning videos, but then all that work winds up sitting on the shelf of a superintendent somewhere, or gets delivered to the wrong address, or gets distributed at a conference but never looked at.

We can solve that problem, but we need to take a new, more creative approach to outreach. Our whole business at WETA is using the media to reach people, providing information that is accessible, creative, and interesting. I mentioned our track record. Readline is based on WETA's proven, successful experience with learning disabilities through our Learning Disabilities Project. WETA has now become the leading media source for information about learning disabilities, including reading disabilities.

We've been the station behind four TV programs on learning disabilities, including Richard Lavoie's How Difficult Can This Be?: The PA.T City Workshop. That program is unquestionably the most important program in this field. It dramatically demonstrates what it's like to struggle with a learning disability. It has been used over and over again—by parents trying to understand their kids, by teachers receiving pre-service or in-service training, by major organizations at their national conferences, and by many other professionals and parents. How Difficult has become the best-selling individual program in the history of PBS Video. We have also broadcast our programs on WETA-TV and distributed them to public TV stations around the country, where the response has been remarkably strong.

We produced The Developing Brain, a one-hour radio documentary examining the science behind how children develop and learn. That program, featuring nationally-known experts like Dr. Reid Lyon and Dr. Sally Shaywitz, was hosted by Judy Woodruff and broadcast nationally on public radio.

In 1996, we launched the LD OnLine web site (www.ldonline.org), which has already become the leading web site in the field of learning disabilities. We're there 24 hours a day, whenever a parent or a teacher or a student wants to sign on. We offer a national calendar, a state-by-state resource guide, in-depth information, bulletin boards, news about new research, audio clips from experts, and a KidZone that showcases kids' art and writing. LD OnLine now records roughly 250,000 page views and roughly 2 million hits each month. That means that in March alone, 250,000 separate documents were read by visitors to our web site. Recently our usage has been growing by 30% each month.

We've learned a lot in developing the Learning Disabilities Project. We've learned how to work effectively with expert researchers and with our expert partners like the Learning Disabilities Association of America, the International Dyslexia Association, the National Center for Learning Disabilities, the American Library Association, and many others. LD OnLine has also been named the official web site of the Coordinated Campaign for Learning Disabilities (CCLD) a three-year, national public awareness campaign sponsored by the six leading national learning disabilities organizations and supported by advertising created by the Ad Council. In October, The National Easter Seal Society gave LD OnLine its EDI Award, which honors projects that celebrate the equity, dignity, and independence of people with disabilities.

We've learned how to package information and how to translate jargon into plain, everyday English. We've learned how to use radio, TV, and the Internet to good advantage.

Most important, we've learned how to create a community of parents and teachers on the Internet and to help parents and teachers to work together. We've had parents in Vermont posting questions at 11 p.m. and teachers or researchers posting thoughtful answers at midnight. We've had kids writing in, sharing experiences, looking for pen-pals, contributing stories and art. And our "Ask the Expert" feature gives parents and teachers direct access to the leading experts in the field. Anyone with access to the Internet can post a question to our experts and get it answered—quickly, authoritatively, and without leaving home.

Every day, we receive letters and e-mail telling us how our programs and our web site are changing people's lives. One user recently wrote:

I would give almost anything to stop even one kid from going through what I did. Things might be better now, but I still remember breaking my own arm to get out of going to one class on one day. . . . I felt like that every day . . . and I broke my arm three times in eighteen months. Something needs to change, now, before another kid has to be that scared and confused and low. If anyone can do it . . . you can!

Now we'd like to build on our experience and put it to work in providing the Readline service. I think we can make a big difference in helping more children learn how to read.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JANET ARNOWITZ

My name is Janet Arnowitz. I have twenty years of teaching experience and have spent the last ten years teaching in the Fairfax County school system in Virginia. My specialty areas include learning disabilities and vocational special needs. My responsibilities include teaching learning and emotionally disabled students. I have had the opportunity to teach in both a team teaching environment (with general education teachers), and also in a self-contained, resource setting.

I have also been involved in my school's instructional programs. Instructional programs are teaching strategies that involve different learning styles for the general and special education population. I have also incorporated new technologies and learning techniques into classroom instruction.

The Need

I believe that better teacher preparation is essential if we are to make progress in teaching reading. Up until now, most teachers have had only limited access to findings from reliable, replicable research on reading.

I believe that most teachers deeply appreciate the assistance of tutors, volunteers, and others concerned about helping children learn to read. But when you're confronted with a child who is poorly prepared for school, or a child who is already failing, the primary educational need is for expert, professional help and instruction.

Having seen WETA's fine work in the field of dyslexia and learning disabilities, I believe the Readline project can make a major contribution in helping to disseminate information about reading to teachers and parents around the country.

My Experience with LD OnLine

I discovered the LD OnLine website (www.ldonline.org) one day while doing school related research at home. As an educator, I am here today to tell you that LD OnLine is the most comprehensive online community available for learning disabled students and their stakeholders. LD OnLine is a powerful resource that has brought together learning disabled students, parents, and teachers. LD OnLine meets its primary goal of providing reliable information to those in need. LD OnLine is a special place in cyberspace where learning disabled children get to show us their best stuff.

Helping Teachers

I found the LD OnLine web-site graphically appealing and easy to use. The content is both deep and current. LD OnLine is broad and appeals to those both experienced and new to the world of the learning disabled. LD OnLine's "Ask the Expert" area has brought together leading experts from the field of learning disabilities. These experts are anxious to share knowledge and help others.

I have used instructional reading strategies found on LD OnLine in class lesson plans. One of the teaching techniques I have incorporated into lesson plans (and shared with colleagues) is phonemic awareness. Phonemic awareness is defined as the activity that builds on and enhances children's experiences with written and spoken language. For example, the phoneme sounds of cat are k/ a/ t.

I have also discussed LD OnLine with Fairfax County entry level, special education and general education teachers. I have found that LD OnLine is an excellent resource for both new and experienced teachers.

Helping Kids

My students were impressed with the KidZone (www.ldonline.org/kidzone/kidzone.html), a section of LD OnLine that offers artwork and stories by young people with learning disabilities. KidZone helps students understand their learning disabilities and build self-advocacy skills. Verona, one of my more emotionally and learning disabled students, wanted to submit her artwork to LD OnLine for inclusion into KidZone.

This week Verona's drawing is being displayed on the homepage of LD OnLine. Verona suffers from poor self esteem. KidZone has given Verona a sense of accomplishment in an area she feels confident. Teachers and students across the nation can now view and admire Verona's work. LD OnLine provides a safe environment where students can feel special.

Helping Parents and Teachers

As a special educator, I frequently attend IEP (Individualized Education Program) meetings with parents of students with special needs. In those meetings, I frequently discuss the value of LD OnLine as an informational tool. Many parents need guidance and reliable information pertaining to learning disabilities. LD On-

Line offers these parents written information and also audio and video clips that feature learning disability experts.

I have also found that LD OnLine's content has helped educate the general education teachers in my school about teaching strategies, IEPs, and other aspects of special education. LD OnLine, through its bulletin boards, also affords general education teachers the unique opportunity to communicate directly with experts in the special education field.

LD OnLine also offers bulletin boards that give parents, teachers, and students a chance to make connections and share their experiences with learning disabilities. LD OnLine also offers links to other leading organizations and online resources in the field.

I have also found great value in two highly respected television programs produced by WETA and highlighted on LD OnLine. These programs are of particular value to teachers, parents, and learning disabled students. The program How Difficult Can This Be?: The F.A.T City Workshop allows viewers to experience the same frustration and tension that children with learning disabilities face daily. When the Chips are Down . . . offers practical advice on dealing with behavioral problems.

Both videos are hosted by Richard Lavoie, a nationally-known expert in the field. These programs have also been seen on WETA, the public broadcasting station in Washington, D.C.,and on other stations around the country.

Readline

A challenge that learning disabled students face is mastering basic reading skills. To ensure that all students acquire sufficient reading skills, it will be necessary for the schools in this country to develop curricula to accommodate diverse learning styles. Students learn in various ways. Teachers need to examine techniques for the auditory, visual, tactile, and kinesthetic learner.

The National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) reports that more than thirty percent of twelfth-graders are reading "below basic" level. This is an extremely serious nationwide problem.

Readline and other media services provided by WETA are imperative if the National Education Goals targeted for reading are expected to be achieved. GOAL 6 says: "By the year 2000, every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship."

Readline will reach and help people on a national scale, one of the great advantages of the Internet.

There is general agreement among researchers and the public that all children must learn to read early in their academic careers. Contrary to common belief, reading failure is not limited to particular types of schools or among specific groups of students.

Students who have difficulty reading represent a cross-section of American children. They include rich and poor, male, female, rural and urban in all sections of the country.

Many students with reading problems have a learning disability. There is increasing evidence, however, that many students identified as "learning disabled" are actually struggling in school because of poor instruction or other factors. As this committee found last year:

The committee intends that professionals, who are involved in the evaluation of a child, give serious consideration at the conclusion of the evaluation process to other factors that might be affecting a child's performance. There are substantial numbers of children who are likely to be identified as disabled because they have not previously received proper academic support. . . . Other cases might include children who have limited English proficiency. Therefore, in making the determination of a child's eligibility, the bill states that a child shall net be determined to be a child with a disability if the determinant factor for such a determination is lack of instruction in reading or math or limited English proficiency.

As the Committee recognized, reading difficulties often stem from poor instruction, lack of reading readiness, and/or limited proficiency in English, all of which can be addressed with the help of WETA's Readline project.

[Additional material may be found in committee files.]

Charles I. Bunting, Chancellor
Vermont State Colleges

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to join you today, to discuss what might be both the most critical issue and the most promising opportunity in education – specifically, to strengthen the reading and literacy skills of our nation's young children. I have heard that some states base their estimates of future needs for correctional facilities in part on third-grade literacy data. Equally, we can project the future demand for college educations, for skilled jobs, and for voting booths, based upon these same measures of early reading and literacy skills.

It then follows that no work is more important than the work of this Committee on this legislation, The Reading Excellence Act, which has the potential to establish the foundations upon which all of our citizens can then build for themselves positive and productive lives.

I would like to devote my remarks to two topics: first, to highlight Vermont's very positive first-year experience with the America Reads program, connecting college students and other volunteers with young children who can benefit from tutoring in reading; and second, to identify a few key directions which would help further strengthen these and related initiatives through this federal legislation.

The importance of Vermont's story in America Reads for this Committee is our early success in bringing new "people" talent and energy together with children who can benefit from their engagement. One catalyst was provided by President Clinton in January, 1998, when he announced the plan to encourage colleges and college students participating in the federal Work-Study program

to devote the work component to tutoring children in reading. The key incentive was quite simple: eliminate the 25% matching requirement for participating community organizations, when the work activity is tutoring in reading for children through the third grade.

In Vermont as elsewhere, the response from colleges, college students, and the community sites -- primarily elementary schools -- has been strong, with even greater promise for the future. Although the financial incentive of the 25% waiver is helpful, I believe the response has been far greater than might have been expected on that basis alone. I believe that the importance of early reading skills in children -- the goal of ensuring that every child can read well and independently -- taps a tremendous response in the broader society. Hence, I believe one of your Committee's goals should be to sustain and strengthen those modest incentives which would further engage our nation's talent and energy in this essential crusade.

The Vermont State Colleges -- five diverse institutions with a total enrollment of 10,500 students in our small, rural state -- responded very quickly to the "call" to join the America Reads effort. Indeed, I was surprised to discover that we were the sole New England representative on the original America Reads Steering Committee. As of today, only fifteen months later, almost one thousand colleges and universities are participating across the nation.

In Vermont, one key to our early progress was the fact that work on children's literacy was a priority for other statewide groups, and for the State of Vermont, as well. Indeed, within a few weeks after the Vermont State Colleges announced our plans, more than a dozen other leaders in literacy efforts across Vermont had themselves organized and made contact with us. Their message was simple and brilliant: congratulations on your new commitment; we welcome you to this cause because we need you and your students; but -- you also need us!

Thus was launched one of the key strengths of our America Reads efforts, one of collaboration and partnership. We established the VSC America Reads Steering Committee, including reading specialists from the faculty of our colleges, from both the state departments of education and libraries, and from a host of non-profit organizations, such as the Vermont Center for the Book and the Stern Center. Such collaboration benefits all. It means that specific initiatives such as our America Reads program fit into an overall, statewide strategy; it pools research and pedagogical expertise; it encourages collaboration and planning in the implementation stage; it provides an excellent sounding board for appraisal and modification based on experience.

The Steering Committee quickly arrived at three key and related decisions. First, however positive the act of "simply reading" to children might be, we would set for the VSC Reading Partners the goal of having a more significant impact on children's early literacy skills. Hence, to accomplish that goal, we made the second commitment – to require all Reading Partners to complete an intensive day of training before working with children. And, finally, we would monitor and evaluate both the process and the results, to further strengthen and modify the program over time.

During this first year, the VSC completed two days of training at the outset of each academic semester, in five locations. A total of 234 new Reading Partners completed training and were subsequently placed in 27 sites in the fall, and 32 sites this spring. These sites included many elementary schools, but included as well headstart centers, public libraries, day care centers, summer day camps, even a low-income housing project and a correctional facility.

The large majority of first-year Reading Partners have been college work-study students, primarily from the five Vermont State Colleges. However, a growing

number are from other colleges and universities who also now are participating in America Reads. Additionally, we have attracted other volunteer energies, including college students not eligible for the work-study program, college employees, and other Vermonters not affiliated with institutions of higher education but who have learned about the effort and in particular were attracted to the training model we have established. Finally, and this is very promising, other key administrators and leaders of volunteer organizations throughout Vermont are themselves participating in the training process, with an interest in extending that model or adapting it to their own literacy efforts.

For your further information, I am including with this statement materials on this training model required of all tutors, developed with our literacy partners through the VSC Steering Committee. The training includes four modules, which combine information from theory and research on reading and child development with hands-on guidance for the reading activities with children. All Partners are provided as well with a kit, which includes children's books and other materials; an important step in our approach is to give children -- and now parents with literacy needs -- real books which they can call their own.

Finally, I have enclosed as well an appraisal of the VSC's first year of America Reads, prepared for the Vermont Department of Education by Nick Boke, Director of the Vermont Center for the Book. Based upon the evaluations completed by both Reading Partners and their supervisors in schools and the other sites, it is generally very positive, while also pointing to areas for improvement. For example, a number of the Reading Partners working in schools were assigned to groups of children rather than individuals -- despite the research which indicates that the greatest impact with at-risk children can be gained with sustained one-on-one involvement.

To conclude this portion of my testimony, let me reiterate a few of the key lessons from the Vermont State Colleges' experience with America Reads to date:

- The opportunities for, and benefits from, collaboration with other individuals and organizations involved with literacy initiatives are tremendous.

- The cause of strengthening children's reading and literacy skills has great potential to engage new and creative talents and energies to the cause.

- To gain the full benefits of these new participants, a formal program of training is essential, and is also actively sought out and valued by the new "recruits."

Finally, I believe the indirect benefits from America Reads may be just as powerful. For example, by involving college students not enrolled in teacher education and child development programs, we may well be recruiting new future talent to our nation's classrooms as well. Second, our commitment to America Reads coincides with the Vermont State Colleges' broader commitment to preK-16 partnerships, fully engaging higher education with school improvement and reform efforts in Vermont. It is very beneficial to connect the initiative to strengthen childrens' literacy skills with new directions, for example, in teacher education and learning assessment. And, beginning in the coming year, we will be able to directly relate the results of second-grade reading assessments throughout Vermont with the investment of people resources through America Reads.

* * *

Let me now turn to my second topic, comments on the pending legislation, the "Reading Excellence Act." Some comments will be directed as well to the work-study provisions of the Higher Education Act, including those which are amended by this Act.

I find a number of very helpful provisions in the legislation, including among others the concept of statewide literacy partnerships which are broad-based and inclusive of the wide range of participants in children's literacy, just as we have worked with such collaborations in the State of Vermont. Additionally, I welcome the clear inclusion of family literacy efforts in the bill, certainly reinforced by the Rand Corporation findings of the positive effects of family literacy strategies, particularly with the most disadvantaged families.

I am sure that it would be more helpful to the Committee, however, to focus on aspects of this legislation which are either unclear or of concern, based upon our experience to date with America Reads in Vermont.

First, I question the value and feasibility of the amendments to college work-study (p 50) which would give priority to certain schools as sites for reading tutors -- particularly in rural states such as Vermont. Most college tutors must fit their work component into a busy daily schedule, and the proximity of the school site is clearly important. Additionally, there clearly are children (and families) with reading skills deficiencies in all American schools, and all needy children will benefit from effective one-on-one tutoring and assistance. Finally, I would argue against priority being given to schools themselves. It has been our experience that public libraries, day care programs, and summer day camps also are important and valuable sites. Finally, such privatization is not consistent with the language on "use of funds" (p 49), which targets preschool children and families, as well as school children.

Second, unless I am misreading these provisions, I would urge that the uses of authorized "sub grants" be broadened to include appropriate support for colleges or other non-profits who are playing significant roles in the provision of literacy services, particularly on a statewide or regional basis. The Vermont State Colleges, for example, are coordinating the statewide delivery of tutorial services, and our literacy efforts in Vermont would be greatly aided if modest support were available for the costs of training, of evaluation, and coordination. The work-study program supports student tutors, but it provides no support for program costs.

Third -- and this may go beyond the current purview of the Reading Excellence Act – I would urge that the college work-study program be modified to assure that more adequate funding be available for tutoring during the summer months. At present, colleges typically have few work-study funds remaining following the academic year. However, there is a tremendous opportunity for Vermont's Reading Partners and those elsewhere, to work with children extensively over the summer, uninterrupted by the complex class schedules which exist during the school year – both for the children and the tutors.

All three of these recommendations for change also have a common thread -- to support, reinforce, and take full advantage of the broad and diverse coalition of partners who have been heeding the "call" to this crucial mission, to ensure that all American children will be able to read well and independently. To put it more succinctly: you've go our attention; don't let us off the hook!

Again, Mr. Chairman, thank you for this opportunity to share our perspectives and experiences in Vermont, and I would be pleased to respond to questions or to provide further information.

[Additional material is retained in the files of the committee.]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DAWNNA LANCTOT

Thank you for allowing me to share my experience as an America Reads Reading Partner. My name is Dawnna Lanctot and I am a student at Community College of Vermont in St. Johnsbury Vermont. I am an America Reads Reading Partner at two different elementary schools; Danville School in Danville Vermont and Barnet Elementary School in Barnet Vermont. I volunteer approximately ten hours per week at each school.

I have attended two literacy training seminars which have been essential to my success as a reading partner. At each training it was stressed that America Reads Volunteers are not reading teachers, we are reading partners. As a reading partner I help foster a lifelong joy of reading by sharing with children my time and my own love of books. It is important that reading with me be an enjoyable experience for children, not an unpleasant one. If a book is too difficult for a child, I help them select a different book rather than watch them get discouraged as they struggle to read. If reading with me is a pleasant experience they will want to read with me again.

At Danville School I work in the first grade classroom and in the third grade classroom. I look forward to walking in to a chorus of enthusiastic first graders asking me if they can read to me. I also look forward to taking one of the third grade reading groups to the library so they can work on their current reading assignment.

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At Barnet Elementary School I work with children who are participating in the SURKUS Reading Club. SURKUS stands for Start Us Reading Keep US reading. SURKUS is for children in Kindergarten through third grade and is not part of the classroom routine, which makes it special to the children who participate. For every ten books a child reads a reward is given, such as a pencil or a bookmark. The children are expressing tremendous enthusiasm for reading, of which I am grateful to be a part of.

I have been a reading partner at Barnet Elementary School since the beginning of the 1997-98 school year, and during the school year I have watched young readers blossom. The children have access to appropriate level text and have plenty of support from teachers, librarians, and America Reads Volunteers.

Rachel started her first grade year reading very simple books with me which had approximately one line of text per page. By the middle of the year she was fluently reading chapter books to me.

Timothy, a second grader, was struggling with the book his teacher had assigned his reading group. He stumbled over words, began fidgeting and stared out the window. By the time he reached the end of the page he had no comprehension of what he had just read. He was embarrassed to read so poorly in front of his peers and he felt very stupid. Later that day he came to the library and I helped him select a simpler book. His eyes brightened as he read the book out

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loud without stammering over the words. His confidence in himself was returning with each page he read, and he no longer felt stupid.

On my first day in the first grade classroom at Danville School the teacher had me take a very reluctant reader to another room so he could read his new book to me. He made it very clear that he did not want to read that book to me. I talked to him about baseball for a few minutes, then suggested that we take turns reading. I read the first page and he read the second page. After a few pages of taking turns he took right off and finished reading it successfully by himself, an achievement he was quite proud of.

America Reads Successfully encourages lifelong readers. The more children read and are read to, the better readers they become. Having America Reads Volunteers in schools listening to and encouraging young readers makes a difference in the children's lives.

Being an America Reads Reading Partner is very important to me. I have been able to share my training, my time, and my own love of books with many children, including my own.

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May 6, 1998

Senator James Jeffords
Chair of the Senate Labor and human Resources Committee
728 Hart Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Jeffords:

On Tuesday, April 28 the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee took-up discussion of S 1596 and S 1590 -- the Reading Excellence Act. This proposal is in response to President Clinton's America Reads proposal. At the core of both proposals is early literacy and professional development, topics that the Michigan Reading Association heartily supports. However, the Reading Excellence Act empowers a fifteen member federal panel to review what states and local schools would propose to do in order to receive grant funding. Our concern is that the federal panel is looking for funding of programs based on "reliable and replicable methodology". Albeit, one would think it laudable to use "reliable and replicable methodology" as the criteria, however, because of the various intervening factors in educating human beings, identifying single methodologies is misleading. Furthermore, few, if any, of the members of the panel are educators or classroom practitioners and it is questionable regarding these panelists' understanding of educational research concerning a balanced reading instructional program. It is the concern of our organization that the criteria of "reliable and replicable methodology" may be a code for funding only phonics-based programs. Furthermore, our concern is that a national panel reviewing applications with such a criterion standard comes dangerously close, if not altogether crossing the line of, allowing only certain methodology to be funded and thereby violating the discretion of local control regarding which methods best apply to their situation. Finally, if such a panel is to exist to review applications for funding of instructional practice, then it certainly should include persons who are more balanced in their understanding of research, instructional practice, and assessment and can speak from the voice of the classroom practitioner.

There has been little room for hearings and revisions at the committee level. This is a bill of significant proportion ($260 million) coupled with a redesigning of the governance of funding applications that will set a precedent for future funding reviews, including Title I. Therefore, it is imperative that these bills receive public and professional input through well-publicized committee hearings before being voted upon.

As Legislative Chairman for Michigan Reading Association, I communicate this letter on behalf of the Michigan Reading Association Board of Directors representing 6,600 Michigan educators whose mission is to promote literacy. If I can be of further assistance, please contact me at 248-960-8397.

Sincerely,

Gwen O'Donnell Graham

Peggy A. Minnis, Program Coordinator
District of Columbia Public Schools
Head Start "*Toyota Family Literacy Program*"

Senator Jefford, members of the Senate Committee, and fellow panelist, I am Peggy Minnis, Program Coordinator for the District of Columbia Public Schools Head Start "Toyota Family Literacy Program". Our program is located in two of the District's public schools; Adams and Moten Elementary Schools. In 1996, we received a three year grant from Toyota Motor Corporation, through the National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL) in Louisville, Kentucky. This is our second year of existence.

Our program is a quality, comprehensive, center based program that empowers families and caregivers to become productive and literate citizens, positive parents, and/or proficient speakers of English; while providing children with developmentally appropriate educational and social practices. During our first year of existence, we proved that family literacy brings about success in the lives of the families that we serve. One of our success stories has accompanied me today. Miss Raynice Brumfield was one of 49 adults that we had the privilege of serving last year. Her testimony will bear witness, that the literacy of parents is the key to empowering families, by not only launching them into self sufficiency; but helping them to become parents with positive parenting skills.

Parents with low levels of education often can not obtain or keep jobs. What begins as an educational problem, soon becomes a financial problem for the entire family. The financial problems of a family can easily lead to stress, dysfunction, physical and mental illness, or alcohol and drug abuse. All of these maladies serve as a breeding ground for sometimes fatal outcomes for family members.

The condition of poverty is linked to literacy; the relationship between the educational level of adults and poverty in the family is clear. The child of parents with low literacy skills does not have the same chance for school success, as the child of highly literate parents. Once the child enters school, he does less well, and is more likely to be retained, than those children of literate parents. Even worse, he quits school at 10 times the rate of his counter parts. These are the characteristics of the parents and children we serve.

To approach literacy through families, is the surest way to increase the education levels of adults and children, because the approach expands the skills of both. It draws on the power of the family to affect its own future. Our Toyota Family Literacy Program has five essential components designed to work interactively to improve parents' basic literacy skills, attitudes toward education, parenting skills, English proficiency, employability skills, and their children's literacy skills; while developing the overall quality of the parent-child relationship.

Parents come to school everyday with their three or four year olds. Parents escort their children to the Head Start classroom, and then go down the hall or right next door to the adult education classroom. Parents learn skills in various academic areas (from learning to read and write for the first time, enhancing reading, math and language skills, while others may be preparing to take the GED examination). Parents are encouraged to set goals for their educational achievement, to design their own work plans and collaborate with peers, under the watchful guidance of adult education and parenting instructors. Meanwhile, parents feel comfortable knowing that their children are close by, participating in the Head Start program, that has been touted as the premier educator of young children. Parents participate in parenting classes that offer a variety of topics for study and discussion, including, child nurturing, managing and coping with child behavior, child development, self esteem, time management, career options, sex education, and drug education; to name a few.

Parents also learn workplace skills in communication, problem solving, teamwork and conflict resolution, all of which will enable them to become self-sufficient through the acquisition of jobs. The program designates specific times when parents leave their learning environment, to go into the child's classroom to work and play together. This time is called PACT-Time (which stands for Parent and Child Together). PACT-Time provides a laboratory where parents actually learn how to teach their children during work-play time, while practicing the literacy skills they have learned in the adult classroom. It is here that parents fulfill their role as their child's most important teacher. Parents and children develop new interaction patterns and often a more positive, supportive relationship. Parents go on numerous field trips which widen their worlds of exposure to the educational resources available in the city. A community organization made up of all males, (headed by a former Head Start father) called "The Significant Male Task Force", visits each site once a month to give books, and read or tell stories to the children. These positive males serve as role models for the many children who do not have a male in their households.

Last school year we serviced 46 families at two sites. This included 49 adults (42 females, 7 males) and 52 children. The average age of the adults was 28 years, the youngest being 17 years old and the oldest being 59 years old. These adults were husbands, wives, single parents, and other relatives of the children enrolled in the Head Start early childhood classes. Fifty-two percent (52%) were African-American; twenty-five percent (25%) were Hispanic, and two percent (2%) were Asian. Fifty-six percent (56%) of the adults were unemployed. Sixty-six percent (66%) of the adults headed single-parent households. Twenty-one percent (21%) had incomes less than $3,000; twenty-three percent (23%) less than $6,000 per year. The average family size was 4.3. The average educational level of the adults was 9.7.

After nine months of instruction both adults and children made significant gains in the program. The predominately adult Hispanic population at the Adams Elementary School site were able to speak, read, and write in English at a much higher level. Seventeen (17) of the twenty-eight (28) adults were able to secure jobs. All of the adults fulfilled their initial parenting goals, two returned to their native homelands. The children made more than a year and four months gain in language, logic, math and literacy skills.

The adults at the Moten Elementary site, which is composed of completely African Americans, made significant gains as well. According to pre and post assessments, these adults increased their abilities to read, write, and calculate by (at least) two grade levels. They showed a great increase in their abilities to talk to their child's teacher, attendance at school activities, modeling reading and writing for their children, assisting their older children with homework, volunteering in the school, and using the public libraries. All parents in the program increased the number of times they read to their children from 1 to 7 times per week. **Reading is no longer just a school activity; it is a family activity.**

The partnership between Head Start, the National Center for Family Literacy, and the Toyota Corporation, has made it possible to change and better the lives of 46 families during our first year. This year, this partnership will better the lives of 40 more families through the power of family literacy. We believe that through passage of legislation like The Reading Excellence Act, LEA's will receive subgrants that will allow family literacy programs (such as ours) to touch the lives of many. I urge the committee to recognize the importance of the Reading Excellence Act and its attempt to create and expand partnerships. Any reading reform should encourage partnerships such as ours. Raynice is here with us today because she is proof that these

partnerships work. The Head Start, Toyota, and National Center for Family Literacy partnership brought Raynice into the program, but family literacy is what kept her here and made her the success she is today.

To emphasize the importance of family literacy in any reading reform undertaken by this body, specific attention should be paid to the Even Start expansion outlined in the Reading Excellence Act. The $10 million that the Act earmarks for grants to help implement statewide family literacy initiatives, by coordinating existing resources, can only result in more successes such as those experienced by Raynice. The expansion of high quality family literacy programs that receive proper technical assistance, and use accurate data, based on reliable, replicable research to evaluate the outcomes of the program, are essential in the language of this legislation. For these reasons, I think family literacy should remain, as part of any Senate reading reform effort. Thank you for the opportunity to share our success with you. I invite you to visit us at any time.

Testimony of Raynice Brumfield
District of Columbia Public Schools
Head Start "Toyota Family Literacy Program"

Thank you Senator Jefford and members of the Senate Committee, for inviting me to share my story with you. By virtue of the fact that I can sit before you to take part in this occasion, proves that without a program like the Toyota Family Learning Tree, I would still be just stuck in the house, taking care of my two small children, faced with a future that didn't look bright.

I am Raynice Brumfield. I am a 25 year old single parent with four children; James 10, Delonte 8, Kiara 5, and Tyrone, age 4. I was born in Washington, D.C., and attended the public schools there. When I was 15 years old I became pregnant with my first child. Between the ages of 15 and 17, I worked at various jobs. I soon found that I could not make enough money to afford food, clothing, baby supplies and living expenses. At age 17, I became pregnant with my second child. By 19, I enrolled in one of the District of Columbia's public vocational schools. I dropped out of that school because the staff was not sensitive to the needs of young mothers, and I did not feel safe in that environment. I started to receive Public Assistance when I was 19, and soon became pregnant with Kiara, and the next year, Tyrone.

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The opportunity to further my education, while being close to my children, seemed like a dream come true. On September 30th, 1996 my children and I started school. The adult education teacher (Mrs. Grace Blackwood), and the parenting instructor (Mrs. Irene Ball), greeted me warmly. I was quiet, scared, and very unsure of myself.

When I entered the program my reading and math levels were at a second grade level. My teachers, and the program's coordinator, Mrs. Peggy Minnis, made the other parents and me feel like we could accomplish anything. They made sure that we maintained a positive self esteem. We were encouraged to set goals, and they helped us work to meet each goal. The work was hard, but soon it became a daily routine, for my children and I to sit at the kitchen table, learning together. As my reading skills improved, I began to enjoy reading stories to my children at home, and going into their classroom to practice and share my new skills with any child who wanted to crawl up in my lap, to hear me read. The harder I worked, the easier it became to help my older children with their homework. I began taking part in the activities at their school. My children's home library grew from 2 or 3 books, to over 40. Reading stories or telling stories to my children has helped in their language development and provided me with practice in reading.

The parenting course helped me understand child development. Understanding the stages that my children were going through, helped me to be patient, understanding, and able to predict their behavior. I learned that there are whole new worlds that my family and I can explore for free. We visit these new worlds every weekend inside the public library. I tell my children that even though we don't have a lot of money, we can still visit far away places and people. Most importantly, we enjoy these adventures as a family. All of my children have their own library cards. I've become a responsible citizen who has a voter registration card, and I vote.

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As a result of being in the Toyota Family Literacy Program, new worlds have opened up for me and my family. Worlds that were once just part of my day dreams..... are now a reality. I am proud to tell you that I now read on a 10th grade level, and my math skills have increased to a 9th grade level. I received an award from my children's school, which honored me as being, "Most Active Parent in Schoolwide Activities". I have volunteered more than 200 hours in my children's school. My children's report cards and teacher comments are no longer negative, but positive. I was invited to speak at last year's 27th Annual Congressional Black Caucus Legislative Conference in Washington, DC., by New Jersey's Representative Donald M. Payne. I shared how Toyota through the National Center for Family Literacy and the Head Start Program are helping to improve literacy in the African American community by focusing on young children and their parents. That speech was placed on the E-mail system of every congressman and representative in Congress. Now the most powerful people in the United States have heard about the wonderful work that all of you in this room have dedicated your lives to.

In January, the Head Start Program invited me to be a guest speaker at there staff development activities. Again, I told how family literacy programs make futures bright. I just took the GED examination on the 16th.

My adult education teacher, encouraged me to apply for an intensive training program through the YWCA's Non-Traditional Jobs For Women Program last school year. I was accepted into the program, and have completed the training, which prepared me to trained as a carpenter, plumber, mason, or electrical worker.

Upon notification of having passed the GED, I have been promised priority consideration for a non-traditional job at George Washington University (in the District of Columbia) through a partnership that has been set up between our program and the university. I will have the opportunity to work for no less than $12.00 per hour, have paid leave and benefits for my entire family. I will gain experience, meet new people, and most importantly, the opportunity to continue my education free of charge. Upon advancement in my job, my children will be able to attend George Washington University and get their college education for free.

The partnership between Head Start, the National Center for Family Literacy and the Toyota Corporation have made my future look bright. By **nurturing** the promise of providing a **quality** education to my children and me, they have given me **enpowerment** through **Literacy**.

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THE HARTFORD COURANT

April 19, 1998 Sunday, STATEWIDE

BYLINE: ROBERT A. FRAHM; Courant Staff Writer

DATELINE: SALISBURY --

BODY:

In a quiet corner at Salisbury Central School, teacher Mary Bush is on a rescue mission.

At her side, wiggling in a small chair, is 6-year-old Kyle Litchfield, a talkative bundle of energy with a missing tooth, a cowlick in his dark brown hair -- and a worrisome problem.

He cannot identify most letters of the alphabet. He struggles to make the connection between letters and sounds. He does not like to draw or write. Sometimes, out of frustration, he calls himself stupid.

"Kyle, look at the card," Bush says. "F -- fish. What sound?"

"FFFFFF," Kyle replies. For a half-hour every day, Kyle leaves his regular classes for a one-on-one phonics lesson, part of his special education program and the first step, everyone hopes, in teaching him to read.

A generation ago, teachers would have scratched their heads about a first-grader like Kyle. Puzzled by his struggle with written language, they simply might have called him a slow learner.

Today, they call him learning disabled.

While experts across the country debate whether too many children are being labeled learning disabled, teachers and parents often believe it is the best chance for children like Kyle.

Many schools wait until children fall behind in third or fourth grade to apply the label, but Salisbury Central identifies children as early as kindergarten when problems are suspected.

At home, Kyle's mother, Connie Green, had noticed that her son would not draw with crayons or pencils and could not identify letters the way his 5-year-old sister, Lindsay, could.

The school tested Kyle and found that he had above-average intelligence but lagged in other areas, including the critical skill of processing sounds. Green and school officials agreed that Kyle should be classified as LD.

About one in five children at Salisbury Central School is classified as disabled. Those with the learning disability label account for 13 percent of the entire school population, nearly twice the state average.

Fran Goodsell, the school psychologist, said the school system's reputation for special education classes is so good that some families have moved there looking for services for their children.

For Kyle, the intensive lessons in both his regular and special education classes already have begun to pay off.

"He no longer says, 'I'm stupid,' " Renee Walsh, his regular classroom teacher, told Kyle's mother recently.

His mother, too, has noticed a difference. "He looks for stuff at home, like on the back of cereal boxes. He'll say, 'That's a T, mom,' " she said.

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Bush, who has taught children with learning difficulties for 26 years, knows firsthand the frustration parents feel when children struggle to read. She said two of her own children experienced reading problems.

That includes her son, who overcame the problems and eventually finished college and law school. He started elementary school in the 1960s, before Congress passed the special education law.

With the help of another parent, Bush gave her son extra help -- assistance that was not called special education at the time.

Today, many parents are convinced that a learning disability designation is the best way to get that kind of help.

"The thing is, these are kids who have difficulty learning," regardless of whether they are assigned an LD label, Bush said. "I wish we could just forget about all that and do what's necessary."

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THE HARTFORD COURANT

April 20, 1998 Monday, STATEWIDE

BYLINE: ROBERT A. FRAHM and
RICK GREEN; Courant Staff Writers

BODY:

As special education classes bulge and push budgets to the brink, many educators suspect the real problem lies with schools themselves -- in ineffective reading instruction.

One in seven Connecticut children is in special education -- the fifth-highest rate in the nation. About half of those are "learning disabled," a label used so frequently that researchers have begun to question what the diagnosis really means.

The category known as LD is the fastest-growing segment of special education, but many say it has become a murky catchall for children whose only real handicap is that schools have failed to teach them to read.

"I'm convinced we're not doing enough to prevent reading problems from occurring in the first place," said John J. Pikulski, president of the International Reading Association.

"I really am concerned that kids are getting labeled, and we are not doing as much as we should to teach them."

The Connecticut Department of Education, too, recently suggested that improper reading instruction might be inflating special education rolls.

But those concerns raise a sticky question:

How should schools teach reading?

That question has put researchers and reading instructors at odds, rekindling a decades-old debate about teaching methods, about phonics vs. literature.

More than 30 years of research sponsored by the National Institutes of Health

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in Bethesda, Md., suggests that many who fall behind would have benefited -- and might have been spared the LD label -- had they been taught with a rigorous, systematic approach to language, including phonics instruction.

One of the main disciples of that viewis G. Reid Lyon, a neuropsychologist with the National Institutes of Child Health and Human Developmentat the NIH. "LD as a category came about not on the back of any scientific push, but because you had a lot of kids not learning in school who did not fit any other category," he said. "The definition is so vague, you can be learning disabled in Vermont and move to Kentucky and be cured."

And when children do acquire the LD label, it often comes after second or third grade -- long after their reading problems began.

Again and again, the NIH studies have shown that these poor readers "don't have any idea how the alphabet works, how the spellings match up to sounds," Lyon said.

Still, much of thatresearch has failed to reach the nation's classrooms, where reading problems afflict not only those with the LD label, but many others. One government-sponsored test indicates that as many as 40 percent of U.S. schoolchildren read poorly.

In Lyon's view, that is an alarming figure, a statistic with long-term consequences such as unemployment, crime and other social ills.

"It is a public health problem," he said. "Kids' entire lives are at risk."

A Last Resort

After watching their son struggle for years with reading, Carol and Peter Schilling of Middlefield saw the learning disability label as his best hope -- a chance to fix a problem they believe his schools had ignored.

For years, they tried to convince teachers and administrators in Regional School District 13 that their son, Jacob, needed extra help.

He'll come around, he's a little slow, they were told.

But then one day last year, when Jacob was in fourth grade, Carol Schilling opened the mail and hit the roof.

After years of positive report cards, the results of Jacob's mastery tests, annual exams given to fourth- grade public school students, laid it out in disturbing detail: Jacob, a boy all agree is intelligent and inquisitive, had fallen way behind his peers, especially in reading.

"I have watched my son struggle from as early as 3 years old in preschool," Carol Schilling told teachers and administratorsat a meeting she demanded after seeing Jacob's scores."Why is District 13 content to let a child like Jacob slide from one grade to the next?"

Carol Schilling said that by the time her son was in second grade, she and her husband felt he was not progressing as he should.

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"But there were no indications based on [Jacob's] progress reports and teacher conferences," she said. "We sensed it and brought it to their attention. In fourth grade, when we got the results of the mastery tests, I was furious. I was just so devastated. If you looked at his grades, he should have done fine."

The Schillings demanded an outside evaluation to see if Jacob was eligible for intensive remedial help under special education. Although the schools already had tested him and found no disability, a team of doctors and psychologists from St. Francis Hospital and Medical Center came up with a strikingly different evaluation.

The hospital said Jacob suffered from mild learning disabilities and recommended an intensive phonics- based program emphasizing the complicated process by which the brain decodes letters into sounds and words. The school system placed him in special education classes for the first time.

Tricia Santi, director of pupil personnel services for Regional School District 13, said teachers try to provide extra help before a child is placed in special education, which is what happened with Jacob. Children don't learn to read until they are developmentally ready, she said, so it is not always a good idea to place young children in special education just because they are having reading trouble.

When children are identified for special education later on, she said, "We occasionally have parents say, 'I wish that something would have happened earlier.' "

Jacob, a boy with blue eyes and freckles who says he might like to be a long-haul trucker, is reading "James and the Giant Peach" these days. He's getting additional extra help in reading and other subjects, but remains behind grade level.

"You need to get teachers who know lots of ways to teach kids to read," Jacob said. "Not all kids learn the same way."

According to researchers at Yale University in New Haven, three- quarters of the students who are behind grade level in reading in third grade will still be behind by high school.

Would children such as Jacob have been better off with regular, intensive, phonics-based instruction much earlier? Lyons and many of the NIH researchers think so.

Letters And Sounds

Much of the research, such as recent brain-imaging studies at Yale, suggests that the fundamental difficulty for most poor readers is the inability to distinguish the individual sounds that make up words.

The word "fat," for example, is made up of three sounds: fff-aah-tuh. Some children have difficulty hearing these bits of sound -- known as phonemes -- and making the connection with printed language. There are 44 phonemes in the English language.

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The NIH studies have led many scientists to agree on one point: Schools should be teaching children -- especially those who are poor readers -- how to manipulate sounds, to rhyme, to spell, to break words into parts and to understand letter-sound relationships; that is, phonics.

Many classrooms, however, have cut back explicit instruction in phonics and the structure of language as they have embraced an approach known as "whole language" instruction. This approach immerses children in literature and emphasizes activities such as keeping journals, writing letters and reading orally or silently.

The NIH research alarms some educators who fear it will lead too many children away from real stories and books.

"I don't think there is any compelling . . . evidence that suggests that a phonic emphasis approach is what will solve the reading problems of [learning disabled] kids," said Richard L. Allington, an education professor at the State University of New York at Albany.

Allington accuses Lyon and other NIHresearchers of a "disinformation campaign" and says general curriculum should not be based on research that focuses only on the poorest readers.

Kenneth S. Goodman, a University of Arizona professor and a leading proponent of the whole-language approach, said the NIH research has prompted legislators to propose laws that "would confine kids to drills and letter-sound relationships and would take literature out of the classrooms."

Not true, says Lyon.

He contends that basic language skills are crucial and must be taught to struggling readers, but can be taught in classrooms filled with literature.

A national panel of experts reached a similar conclusion last month.

The panel, convened by the National Research Council, endorsed elements of the whole-language approach, such as frequent writing and independent reading, but also emphasized that beginning readers need explicit instruction in letter-sound relationships, spelling and the connection between speech and print.

"Because reading is such a complex and multifaceted activity, no single method is the answer," said Catherine Snow, a Harvard University professor and chairwoman of the panel.

The report sought to calm a debate that often has been driven by politics and hardened opinion.

The whole-language approach has come under attack in some places. Two states, California and Alabama, have passed laws requiring schools to include phonics in reading instruction, and several others now require it for children who have reading problems.

Connecticut does not require any specific method, but a handful of schools,

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influenced by the research, have begun to intensify their training in phonics and other fundamental language skills.

Emphasis On Drills

In a classroom at Salisbury Central School in the northwest corner of the state, teacher Karen Lundeen puts three cards on a table in front of a group of kindergartners.

Each card has a word and picture: "tire," "bag" and "fire."

"What two words rhyme?" she asks.

"Fire and tire," a boy replies.

The drill is part of a new emphasis on word skills at the school. All regular kindergarten classes began a program last year that focuses on skills such as rhyming, breaking words into syllables and manipulating sounds.

The program started in regular classes at the urging of Mary Bush, a special education teacher. "There was a point where people sort of frowned on phonics," she said, "but our staff was very receptive."

One problem, however, is that "most teachers, it seems to me, don't have the training to do it," Bush said.

Teachers generally "are not being provided with . . . knowledge about the structure of spoken and written language or with the practical methods and hands-on experience necessary to enable them to fully meet the needs of children learning to read," said a paper written last year by reading experts Susan Brady of the University of Rhode Island and Louisa Moats, who is directing an NIH study of reading in Washington and Houston.

At Salisbury Central, it is too early to tell whether the new emphasis on early reading skills will reduce the learning disability rate -- 13 percent of the school population, nearly twice the state average.

Since 1992, special education enrollments in public schools across the state have grown by 11 percent, eclipsing the 7 percent growth in overall enrollment, according to a report last year by the state Department of Education.

"Special education is often considered the first, rather than last, option for students with learning and behavior problems, even though many of the students who are referred are clearly not disabled," the report said.

Special education now accounts for 18 percent of expenses in the state's public schools, up from about 12 percent 15 years ago, state figures show.

Pikulski, the International Reading Association president, testified before the U.S. Department of Education last fallthat no child should be given the LD label without first being given a specific program to improve reading.

Others, too, say the large number of LD referrals is troubling.

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"If lots of children have got it, what does it mean to say it's abnormal?" said Robert J. Sternberg, a Yale University psychologist and one of the nation's leading authorities on the nature of intelligence.

"If you label a very large number of kids, clearly you have gone outside the realm of clinical issues to social policy issues, political issues," he said.

Many children with reading disabilities do not appear to differ substantially from other poor readers who are not labeled, he said.

"We're too concerned about labels," Sternberg said. "What we need to be concerned about is, what is the source of poor reading?"

GRAPHIC: PHOTOS: (2 b&w), RICK HARTFORD / THE HARTFORD COURANT
GRAPHIC 1: (b&w), Rick Green / The Hartford Courant
GRAPHIC 2: (b&w), The Hartford Courant; Sources: U.S. Department of Education, State Department of Education; PHOTO 1: MIDDLEFIELD FIFTH-GRADER Jacob Schilling goes over an assignment book with his father, Peter, in their kitchen. Although Jacob was falling behind his class in reading, the school district tested him and found no disability. But a team of doctors and psychologists from St. Francis Hospital and Medical Center said Jacob suffered from mild learning disabilities and recommended an intensive phonics-based program.; PHOTO 2: ANGERED BY THE RESULTS of her son's fourth-grade Mastery Test results in reading, Carol Schilling demanded action from the school district. "Why is District 13 content to let a child like Jacob slide from one grade to the next?" she asked.; GRAPHIC 1: Failed by the system; How a Middlefield student fell through the cracks of special education.; [Library note: This chronology was not available electronically for this database.]; GRAPHIC 2: The national rise in LD students; * The percentage of children identified as learning disabled has risen steadily over the past 20 years. This chart shows the percentage of children nationwide identified with the most common disabilities from 1977 through 1997. Connecticut's LD rates are higher.; * Connecticut has one of the highest percentages of special education students in the country. For the 1996-97 school year nearly 14 percent of public school students were identified as having a disability under federal special education law. The chart shows the number of students in each category and the prevalence rate of each, as a percentage of all special education students and of overall school enrollment.;

THE HARTFORD COURANT

April 21, 1998 Tuesday, STATEWIDE

BYLINE: ROBERT A. FRAHM and
RICK GREEN; Courant Staff Writers

BODY:

A record statewide increase in the number of legal hearings between parents and schools in special education disputes comes as no surprise to Ridgefield lawyer William Laviano.

"I'm probably responsible for close to half of that," said Laviano, whose attack-dog approach gives school administrators the jitters.

The outspoken Laviano, who estimates that three-fourths of his cases are in special education, has become a poster boy for critics who say special education litigation has gotten out of hand.

"You have a group of attorneys out there who see [special education] as a way to make a living," said David H. Larson, superintendent of schools in Middletown.

Special education has become big business, not only for lawyers, but for psychologists and other educational consultants.

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Parents and schools alike have sought legal, educational and medical advice as the number of special education hearings in Connecticut has risen sharply.

Between 1990 and 1994, state figures show, the number of hearings tripled.

The due process hearings, as they are known under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, are the chief forum for resolving disputes between parents and schools. They also are a source of frustration, critics say.

"Over time, the due process system has evolved into a highly litigious, process-oriented procedure that fails to serve the interests of anyone," the state Department of Education said in a report issued in February.

Such hearings once lasted a day or two, but now often go on for days or weeks at a time, sometimes including the testimony and cross-examination of various expert witnesses, said Theresa DeFrancis, a lawyer in the special education division of the state Department of Education.

"I used to be able to put a year's worth of hearing records in one file cabinet," she said. "They are in five or six cabinets now."

Some lawyers have begun advertising in the Yellow Pages under a separate category titled "special education law."

The trend worries school officials, but special education groups say it simply means that more parents are standing up for their rights under federal law.

"A lot of it is just the frustration with the public schools . . . with a system that hasn't been able to respond and help children," said Beryl Kaufman, executive director of the Connecticut Association for Children with Learning Disabilities.

When families disagree with schools over special education services, federal law provides for administrative hearings to resolve the disputes.

Parents and schools often hire lawyers and other specialists to bolster their arguments at those hearings.

"I've been in business since before the '90s, and there has been an increase in my workload," said Eileen F. Luddy of Higganum, who prepares independent evaluations of children and has testified at many hearings -- sometimes for parents, sometimes for school systems.

One reason for the increase in hearings "is that parents are becoming more educated" about special education, she said.

Howard M. Klebanoff, a West Hartford lawyer who specializes in representing people with disabilities, agrees.

"Parents have become much more aware of their rights," he said, adding that parents are getting advice from various advocacy groups and even from the Internet.

But while Klebanoff said he continues to hear from many parents who want hearings, there seems to be more willingness to compromise.

"I think both sides are beginning to realize . . . that hearings are an avenue of last resort. They're expensive, they're time-consuming, and the child often sits in limbo."

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Educators and legal experts agree that one reason the number of disputes has increased is that school districts are unde: pressure to hold down expenses, including special education costs.

"A lot of school districts, in the rush to save money, think if they [cut back on] special education it will save money," said Kaufman, executive director of the learning disabilities association. But, she said, parents are likely to challenge such cuts.

School officials say another reason for increased litigation is that a change in federal law in the late 1980s enabled parents lawyers to collect fees from school districts if they win their claims.

Rather than fight, schools sometimes find it less expensive to give in to parents' demands, said Thomas B. Mooney, a Hartford lawyer who has represented school boards in many cases.

"Special education has become 'Let's Make a Deal' because the costs of due process hearings are so expensive, and the decisions are so subjective," he said.

Still, school officials continue to complain about the lawyers, the consultants, the hours of time spent at hearings -- and, of course, the cost.

In 1996, parents made more than 300 requests for hearings or mediation, state figures show.

In a state with more than 70,000 special education students, "that is not runaway litigation," said Laviano, the Ridgefield lawyer. "If there is anything parents have to do and should do, it is to fight for their kids' education."

And Laviano had this to say about school administrators: "I hope the legal costs drive them crazy, because the way to avoid legal costs is to do the right thing in the first place."

THE HARTFORD COURANT

April 19, 1998 Sunday, STATEWIDE

BYLINE: RICK GREEN; Courant Staff Writer

BODY:

It is rare for a child in Simsbury to be labeled as learning disabled; fewer than one in 20 students are. But in neighboring Granby, the number is about one in 10.

In wealthy Greenwich, a consultant last year found that nearly one in three high school students were in special education, most of them learning disabled. Meanwhile, at Bassick High School in Bridgeport, in one of the state's poorest cities, fewer than one student in 20 gets the special attention required forthe learning disabled.

More than 35,000 students are labeled as learning disabled in Connecticut, but sharp disparities from one town to the next raise disturbing questions about the system's basic fairness.

Lacking clear standards, the state's 166 school districts have embarked on their own interpretations of what constitutes a learning disability, resulting in a chaotic patchwork. Some children who are in special education programs shouldn't be; others who should be aren't. Meanwhile, special education costs in Connecticut have exploded, as they have nationwide, forcing districts to take money away from regular education programs.

"We are putting labels on kids who are not learning disabled," said Bridgeport Superintendent of Schools James Connelly. "The resources could be used on the youngsters who truly have educational needs."

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Across the country, the percentage of learning disabled students has nearly quadrupled since 1975, when Congress passed a law mandating special services for disabled children. A child who is learning disabled has a disorder in understanding some aspect of written or spoken language.

Learning disabilitiesrepresent the largest group -- about half -- among the major disabilities that fall under the general label of "special education." The general label also includes students with mental retardation, speech or language impairments or serious emotional disturbance.

Connecticut, a state with some of the highest-achieving students in the land, has one of the highest percentages of learning disabled children in the country -- 6.7 percent. In some schools, the number of learning disabled children is double or even triple the state average, while others have rates below 3 percent.

When it comes to diagnosing a learning disability, the child's hometown can count as much as any disability, but so can gender. Boys are far more likely than girls to be diagnosed as learning disabled, a practice critics say too often is based on disruptive behavior, not on any true learning difficulty. For most learning disabled students, the basic problem is poor reading skills.

While state and federal laws provide guidelines for determining whether a child is learning disabled, some communities and individual schools liberally interpret them.

Across the state, conflicting tales abound regarding the learning disabled label: schools that identify too many children,and schools that identify problems too late; parents who go to court for the label, and others who fight to have it removed; schools in which 80 percent of LD students are boys; and principals who spend over half their time on special education issues.

For children who need extra help in reading, for example, too often the only option has been to place the learning disabled label on them.

Caught in the middle are parents trying to figure out why a child is struggling in school -- and whether there truly is a learning disability.

"My first question was, 'Why does this happen?' " said Therese Duncan, a Kent mother of four. "You spend a period of time trying to figure out, 'Was it my fault?' When your child is not succeeding, you have to blame someone."

"You have to understand the fear" that a struggling child won't get the extra attention he or she needs, said Duncan, who currently has two learning disabled children in Regional School District 1. For many parents, special education is the best way to get help for their child.

"At this point," Duncan said, "it is the only option."

A 'Smorgasbord'

The federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act defines a learning disability as a disorder in listening, speaking, reading, writing, spelling or math.

"The [special education] label was created in 1975 because mentally retarded individuals were not allowed in schools," said Mariann J. Rossi-Ondusky, who supervises special education in the Middletown public schools. "Now LD is like a smorgasbord. Everybody is LD."

Rossi-Ondusky said the state must set far clearer standards for determining who is learning disabled and who isn't. As it is now, she said, "Anybody can be

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'special education.' I've just got to give you the right tests."

While federal law guarantees a "free and appropriate education" for learning disabled students, what has evolved raises questions about how far the law goes.

• A bright third-grader is placed by parents into a costly private school. The parents hire a lawyer and argue that their daughter's learning disability is the school's fault and that the local district should pay for the private school.

• A middle school student in a wealthy town who is assessed as gifted gets a private tutor because he also is labeled learning disabled.

• The number of high school students who are called disabled and therefore get extra time to take the SAT tests has more than doubled in the last five years.

• A profitable cottage industry of lawyers and consultants has sprouted up around the learning disabled, pressuring local schools to provide additional special education services.

State guidelines regarding learning disabilities urge districts to "develop and implement a system that is aggressive, efficient and effective in finding students." Recently, the state has proposed revising the guidelines, which haven't been changed since 1983.

But even state guidelines acknowledge the "variability" of learning disabilities because of a number of factors: LD is more socially acceptable than mental retardation; there may be "inappropriate" assumptions based on cultural or economic factors; and many schools lack programs to accommodate underachievers.

"Nobody is slow anymore," said Norwalk Superintendent of Schools Ralph Sloan, formerly superintendent in Simsbury and in Concord, Mass. "If you are not in the fast track, you have a disability."

"In many cases, you have got fairly sophisticated parents who are looking for some kind of resource to help their kid, who might be less academically dynamic," Sloan said.

In some towns, a certain cachet has emerged around the LD label. It can open doors for frustrated parents -- giving their child a chance to take tests untimed, a laptop computer, additional tutoring and, sometimes, a chance to get into college under special admissions policies for those identified as learning disabled.

"If you want your kid identified LD, you move," said Robert Sternberg, a Yale psychology professor and author of two recent books on learning disabilities. Sternberg is highly critical of the murky definition of learning disabled and its misuse by both parents and school districts.

"If your kid is not achieving at the level you want," Sternberg said, "you can get the kid labeled, and that opens up benefits to which the child is legally entitled."

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Different Towns, Different Rates

Moving from Simsbury to neighboring Granby would more than double the likelihood that a student would be labeled as learning disabled. While it may seem unusual that two adjacenttowns would have vastly different rates for labeling children, it isn't.

At Granby's middle school and at two intermediate schools, more than 13 percent of students are learning disabled, twice the state average. Among the town's five schools, nearly 80 percent of the LD population is male, which mirrors a national pattern of identifying more boys.

Superintendent of Schools Gwen Van Dorp said her town doesn't have a lot of resources for struggling students, unless they are in special education, which provides a federal guarantee of specialized help.

"We don't have a great deal of remedial services," she said. "Because we don't have those, it is possible that a child could be termed LD when, by the purely technical sense, that may not be so."

On the other hand, school officials in Simsbury say they are reluctant to identify a child as learning disabled.

"The biggest danger [in over-labeling] is that we are giving kids a message that there is something wrong . . . that you need special attention and help," said Gregory W. Little, who supervises special education programs in Simsbury. "The child has a strong likelihood of becoming dependent as an adult."

Simsbury's approach stresses not identifying a child as disabled, but still offering extra help. If a child is in academic trouble in Simsbury, teachers are required to work closely with parents. For example, behavior and firm discipline at home are emphasized.

"Kids who are not achieving, it's not because they can't. It's because they choose not to for various reasons," said J. Brien O'Callaghan, a clinical psychologist who advises the Simsbury Public Schools.

"Every time a child doesn't respond, there is a knee-jerk reaction to call it a disability," he said.

The inconsistency between Simsbury and Granby is typical.

At the other end of the state, at Plainfield's Central Middle School, over 15 percent of the school's 660 students are learning disabled, more than 60 percent of them boys. Yet, a few miles away in Killingly, the percentage of middle school students identified as learning disabled is half that.

James Blair, Plainfield's director of pupil personnel services, said that in poor districts with large classes and few extra resources, special education is the only way to assure that a child gets extra help.

"It is a shame we have to have kids fail before we give kids the assistance they need," he said.

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Fewer Normal Students

Recently, a state Department of Education report noted that "special education" students rarely have the label removed.

Ralph Harvey, the father of an 11-year-old Milford boy identified as learning disabled five years ago, knows this well. His son, with an IQ of 141, had difficulty concentrating and completing his work. The school and the boy's parents agreed that he needed special education help.

But by 1996, Harvey decided that special education was harming his son. He filed suit in federal district court charging that his son had been unlawfully discriminated against by being classified as learning disabled.

Harvey wanted the label removed, but to have special services for his son continued -- an impossibility under a system that often bases decisions to provide extra attention on whether a child is diagnosed as needing special education.

The circumstances surrounding the Harvey case are not atypical: a messy divorce and a child who hasa high IQ but substantial problems with organization, concentration and working with others. Three years after his initial referral, the boy continued to show "a large discrepancy between his potential and level of performance," according to court documents.

Citing the boy's persistent problems in school, educators in Milford denied Harvey's request, as did a state Department of Education hearing officer. An independent evaluation of the boy also confirmed "a learning disorder" in "the mechanics of academics."

According to documents in the case, Harvey testified that special education was "harmful and a hindrance, making [his son] too dependent. He should be making himself organized and responsible without help. . . . The LD label is a stigma."

Worried state educators say school districts must do more to offer extra help to students before placing them in special education programs -- particularly children with poor reading skills. Earlier this year, the state board of education approved goals aimed at decreasing the number of children placed in special education, including creating new guidelines for deciding who is eligible.

"The danger is you are giving a label to a kid who shouldn't have it," said Leslie Averna, associate commissioner at the state education department. "Some kids are truly special education. There is [also] a group of these kids . . . who don't belong there."

Recently, a detailed study of how to prevent reading difficulties in young children by the National Research Council urged more attention to the reading problems of very young children, instead of placing children in special education later on.

For any of this to happen, teachers will need extensive new training and more resources for the classroom, leading educators and researchers say.

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Typically, referrals for special education have less to do with a disabling condition and more to do with instruction, said Louisa Moats,a board member of the International Dyslexia Association who is helping oversee a five-year study of early reading instruction in Washington, D.C., and Houston. "The teacher gets to the point where she [feels] she couldn't handle the problem without help," said Moats, who specializes in identification and treatment of reading difficulties. "That would explain why they don't refer children [to special education] who are well-behaved and hard-working."

Increasingly, schools have developed "a much narrower sense of what normal behavior is," said Claire Gold, a former superintendent in Westport and now a special education consultant.

The accompanying dramatic increase in children deemed learning disabled is no accident, she said.

"What is normal," she said, "is seen as a very narrow group of kids."

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Rising costs

Over the past two decades the cost of special education has risen dramatically in Connecticut, to an average of about 18 percent of expenditures on public education in 1996-97. About 14 percent of the state's school population was labeled special education that year. Here is a selection of communities around the state and how their special education costs have risen, since 1981.

Special education costs as a percentage of overall education

District	1981-82	1985-86	1995-96	1996-97
Bridgeport	12.3%	14.8%	14.8%	15.7%
Farmington	10.3	11.3	10.6	10.5
Glastonbury	10.6	14.0	16.0	16.4
Greenwich	13.2	18.2	19.9	20.8
Hartford	16.4	19.2	22.0	20.2
Middletown	11.5	12.8	18.0	18.4
New London	14.9	16.2	24.9	25.1
Simsbury	9.5	10.7	12.6	13.6
Voluntown	14.2	14.6	27.2	28.7
STATE	12.4%	14.7%	17.8%	18.0%

SOURCE: State Department of Education

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THE HARTFORD COURANT

April 20, 1998 Monday, STATEWIDE

BYLINE: RICK GREEN; Courant Staff Writer

BODY:

It would be tough to find a classroom in Connecticut where children are classified and taught based on a score from an IQ test -- unless those children were special-education students.

The IQ test -- long a matter of heated debate and increasingly discredited as a single measure of innate intelligence -- remains a basic tool for assessing whether a child is learning disabled.

Critics say reliance on the IQ test has led to too many children being identified as learning disabled. Further, they say a score from an IQ test offers no insight into whether a child has a reading disability. Reading problems are the primary reason children are placed in special education as learning disabled.

Meanwhile, some argue that continued reliance on the IQ test sends a mixed signal to teachers. While school psychologists continue to use the IQ test to measure the abilities of a child who may be learning disabled, classroom teachers -- encouraged by the state Department of Education -- are often told that all children can achieve at high levels and that there are many levels of intelligence beyond what the IQ measures.

Under state and federal guidelines, schools must find a "discrepancy" between achievement and intellectual ability in order to label a child learning disabled. To identify a discrepancy, school psychologists assess whether a gap exists between a student's performance on various standardized tests and the student's potential, as measured by an IQ test.

A large enough gap between ability and achievement couldsignal a learning disability, the thinking goes. Most states use some form of this IQ-discrepancy formula to help decide whether a child is learning disabled. The higher a child's IQ, the more likely that a gap between ability and performance will show up.

"The irony is that a youngster who is not achieving in reading, but whose IQ score is less than average, is not going to get the services that a youngster would get who has a higher IQ," said Mary Jo Kramer, superintendent of schools in Milford. "We have to stop using this phony discrepancy model."

Researchers say IQ tests reveal nothing about whether a child might have a neurological impairment that could cause a learning disability.

"If you use a discrepancy . . . you will get kids with high IQs and average reading skills. They will be called learning disabled when, in fact, they don't have any problems," said Linda Siegel, a special-education professor at the University of British Columbia.

Intelligence has nothing to do with whether a child has a learning problem, Siegel said.

"I don't think there is anything useful about measuring whatever we call ability," she said. "We want to measure how the child is learning the basic skills we want the child to learn."

State educators are also recognizing the inherent problems in relying on the IQ test and on a discrepancy between ability and performance.

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"There is real concern . . . of whether or not the discrepancy really identifies someone with learning disabilities," said Anne Louise Thompson, a consultant for the state Department of Education.

The discrepancy method has been used to identify more than 30,000 children in Connecticut as learning disabled. School psychologists and directors of special education say IQ testing is just part of an intensive process, pointing out that many other tests and evaluations often are done before a child is identified as learning disabled.

THE HARTFORD COURANT

April 21, 1998 Tuesday, STATEWIDE

BYLINE: RICK GREEN; Courant Staff Writer

DATELINE: GREENWICH --

BODY:

In the reassuring confines of this suburb of stone-walled estates and seemingly limitless potential, no students are below average. They are in special ed.

But with a consultant's recent discovery that nearly a third of local high school students are in special education programs, this is hardly a joke. Greenwich, deeply proud of its reputation as one of the top school districts in the nation, is struggling with an explosion of students in special education.

Overall, about 17 percent of Greenwich students are in special education programs, compared with the state average of 14 percent. Among special education students, about half are "learning disabled." Seven out of 10 are boys. School administrators say they spend half their time handling special education issues. Dozens of disputes end up in litigation. This year alone, special education spending was more than $1 million over budget for the second year in a row.

In short, says former Superintendent of Schools John A. Whritner, who retired in December after eight years, the situation has spun out of control. "Nobody seems to mind having that [special education] armband put on a kid," said Whritner said. "Nobody sees it as a negative. Some see it as a badge of honor."

While Greenwich's experience may be among the more extreme, the problems the town is facing can be seen in nearly every school district in Connecticut, where increasing numbers of children with reading problems end up labeled learning disabled.

Special education programs are guaranteed by law for children who have learning, emotional or speech disabilities, mental retardation, or physical disabilities such as blindness. Special education has attracted considerable

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attention of late, lately, largely because of its high costs, but also because of the dramatic broadening in the description definition of children no longer thought to belong in a regular classroom.

In Greenwich, a growing population of working poor and those of individuals whose first language is not English have has brought a more needy population to the schools and driven up the numbers of special education students. And some Pfamilies also have movedto town specifically to take advantage of the extensive special education programs.

But something less obvious is also at work in this community of about 60,000 on the cusp of New York that has long viewed itself as unique, something special.

From the marine biology lab at the high school to the kitchens in the gated neighborhoods overlooking Long Island Sound, this is a community with a palpable sense of great expectations.

Along friendly and prosperous Greenwich Avenue, barbers still give small children haircuts in chairs shaped like little cars. A mom or a nanny can walk into one of the many clothing stores and buy a toddler the tiniest of camel's hair blazers. Polite police officers wearing white gloves direct traffic at each intersection.

The typical house here sells for an average price of just over $1 million. Most parents are college graduates, and many are professionals. The staunch civic and community life and nationally prominent schools justifiably make Greenwich a magnet for the demanding corporate executive and family.

"People come to this town and pay a premium price, expecting outstanding," said Whritner said. "And they will do anything to get outstanding."

Angry Parents

Twenty women sit around a table in a second-floor conference room at town hall in Greenwich on a Wednesday morning, each with a story. It's a friendly, social group that makes up the "special education service committee.," with There's lots a lot of chatter about recent fund-raising activities.

The mission here is deadly serious: hold the school system accountable for its special needs children.

"Let's do the round table. What's going on in your schools?" one woman says. Representatives from each school carefully update the group on what is happening. There is much discussion about a recent incident where in which a disruptive special education child was removed from a classroom.

The potent tool that these parents have on their side is federal law: the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Enacted in 1975, the law guarantees that all children with disabilities -- from mental retardation to learning disorders -- have access to a free and appropriate education, individually tailored to meet a student's specific needs. The education must be provided in the "least restrictive" environment. The Rights rights of the child and family are protected through strict safeguards.

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"The parents are angry. We started this thing three years ago," said Candace Timpson, one of three co-chairs of the special education service committee, in an interview one morning at her home. "We went to every single school and we talked to parents and there was such anger there. There really is the feeling that we are on the educational dole. With this group we are empowered, and we are not ashamed."

In the view of several of the school system's administrators, some of these parents are more than empowered; they are a pain.

"Greenwich is having trouble dealing with contentious parents. It takes a great deal of time and energy," said Kate McGraw, part of a team of consultants who that recently examined special education programs in Greenwich. The town has a well-known record of giving in to parents who demand additional special education services.

"I routinely get cases where the parents' attorney says you don't have an appropriate program," said Joyce Young, a lawyer for the town of Greenwich who spends much of her time handling special education disputes. "What gets lost in the picture is the expertise of the school."

For many special education parents, though, their stories are about years of frustration. They tell of inattentiveness to children in special education programs: children struggling to read and do their homework, and years of fighting with the school system to get appropriate services.

"You cannot get your child the proper education unless you have the full force of the law behind you," said Louise M. Tonning, a licensed child psychotherapist whose eighth-grade son and third-grade daughter have been identified as learning disabled.

"People are turning to look at LD because there aren't any alternatives, other than hiring a private tutor or sending them to a private school," said Tonning said.

"I can't get help for my kid unless I slap a label on them. . . . You have to be put in a special room and a special class, which means there is something wrong with you," Tonning said. "All these kids are getting that message.

"I don't think people realize the stress that this puts families under."

A Third Of The High School

The cavernous room that houses the "student center" at Greenwich High School resembles a field house at a small college. There's a food court. Groups of students congregate at tables to sip gourmet coffee and sample muffins before morning classes begin. in the morning before class to sip gourmet coffee and sample muffins.

Down the hall, in a new wing, a huge pendulum will soon be installed, marking time in a glass-walled atrium that looks out on athletic fields.

More than a quarter of the students are already earning college credits. The

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school boasts six choruses, plus marching, concert and jazz bands. Musicians also play in an orchestra, string ensemble, flute chorus and string quartet. There are 31 varsity sports teams. Nearly 300 different academic courses are offered.

"One of the things in Greenwich is I don't think we do anything halfway," explained Eileen Petruzillo, headmistress of the high school.

"When you have a population that includes educated and involved parents, you are responsive to them," she said. "The programs that we have may be appropriate for the town of Greenwich. I don't mean to sound elitist, I mean it to sound cultural."

Claire Gold, an education consultant who worked on the recent study of Greenwich's special education program, offers a tough assessment of the high school. Gold's team questioned a school curriculum where in which the options for students who are not on a high-powered college track can be limited to special education.

"Stop and think about it," Gold said. "Can a third of your population be disabled? It just doesn't stand up to reason."

What Gold discovered inside the world of special education in Greenwich shocked even her: children identified as disabled, when they are not; overwhelmed staff members fearful of being sued; a community intent on identifyuing children in need of special education as a means way to get additional services for children; an over-inclination to always spend more money on new programs; and individual schools with particularly high rates of identifying children in need of special education.

"Special education should not be used for the system's difficulty in dealing with normal youngsters . . . [who are] not ready to meet Greenwich's expectations," Gold told a public meeting late last fall where at which her team presented its findings.

Gold and Whritner worry about a school system that makes huge demands of its high-achieving students and then labels those who don't fit in as disabled and offers them a lesser education. They say Tthe label may not be helping many of the children, many of whom are left more dependent on the system., they say.

"We give the kid a diploma and not necessarily the skills that he needs," Whritner said.

Few people at the high school appear concerned that too many students land in special education. There is little reluctance by parents to have their children tested for a possible learning disability,Petruzillo said.

"Why Greenwich is unique is that they took the [special education] law seriously," said William Dinnean, a teacher at the high school. Perhaps, he suggested, Dinnean, it is Greenwich is acting properly, while that is doing things right and others who are neglecting disabled students.

"This is a highly educated community. They know a learning disability," he said. "You've got staff that are particularly savvy and particularly

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well-trained."

"Not to create a special ed factory . . . but these are students we should be providing for," said Dinnean, who was recognized as one of the town's six "Distinguished Teachers" last year."Having a learning disability is like nothing here. My kids blend in. It is a fact of life."

Some learning disabled students, who (school officials requested they not be identified by name),were also enthusiastic.

"It gives you more time to work on things," said one 18-year-old male. "You get a lot more one-on-one time with your teachers."

"I wish that everybody had the time to go to the [special education] resource room," said another young man.

"When I first came to school, I would never focus on stuff that had to do with class," he said.

Gayle Donowitz, who supervises special education at the high school, said the school is responding to students' needs. Teachers are deeply committed to all types of learners, she said.

"Nobody goes around diagnosing kids that don't have needs that need to be addressed," Donowitz said.

A Growing Rift

Tension and animosity toward special education has been brewing for years in Greenwich. Wendy Breakell, parent of three and a longtime resident, can't get away from escape it -- even on "girls' night out."

"I have this group of friends. These are people I have known for 12 or 15 years," says Breakell said. When they go out and the talk turns to the rising cost of special education, she keeps quiet. Two of her three children are learning disabled and receive services under special education -- attention that have has made a huge difference in the entire family's life.

"Every time the topic of special education comes up, they say it's getting too much, . . . that it's taking away from what their kids should have," says Breakell said.

An incident this last fall in which a special education child attacked other children at an elementary school drew wide attention across town, adding to the rift between special ed and regular ed parents.

"It's very hot," says Breakell said.

Taxpayers spend plenty on the Greenwich schools, in Greenwich, about $10,900 per child. Meanwhile, sSchool spending has risen 25 percent since 1993., and Sspecial education costs are a big part of the increase.

"You are committing huge amounts of resources to areas where they aren't necessarily needed," said Whritner, the former superintendent.

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Earlier this school year, Whritner unexpectedly had to use money slated for textbooks and other supplies to hire additional classroom aides for special education students. School administrators report that they are spending over half their time just on special education issues, Whritner said.

"There are tons of chiluren who are needlessly being identified as, quote, 'disabled,' " said Kay Wall, an Old Greenwich parent and outspoken critic of education locally and statewide. "We just keep spending more every time that they ask for anything."

Recently, the board of education is considering a long range plan for special education that will more carefully monitor the program. They also hope to set more clear criteria for identifying students in need of special education and to provide more services for children without placing them in special education programs.

"The Greenwich community has been overwhelmed with the discussion of special education for the last two years," said Lile R. Gibbons, president of the board of education.

Much of the special education problem in her town "has to do with what the community has come to expect.I'm not sure that is good for the community, and I'm not sure that is good for the child in special education. It's a label that they may not deserve," Gibbons said.

"We have a nation of yuppie parents out there who are demanding perfection for their children. If something goes wrong, they see it as the school's fault."

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A quick look at Greenwich

Population (1997): 57,732

Median income: $80,568

Average home sales price (1997): $1,136,713

Public school enrollment: 7,564

Percentage special education: 17.0% (69% male, 31% female)

(Breakdown: 69% male, 31% female)

Minority enrollment: 19.9%

Students who qualify for free or reduced-price meal: 8.5%

State rank in spending per pupil: 1 ($10,909)

Average SAT scores, verbal and math total: 1,079

Private school enrollment: 2,530

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Estimated commuters to New York City each morning: 8,379

SOURCE: State Department of Education, state Department of Economic Development, Greenwich Chamber of Commerce, Greenwich Board of Education.

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Extra time on the SATs

* Increasing numbers of high school students are labeled as disabled under federal special education laws and are taking the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) under "nonstandard" conditions. For most students, this means they have extra time to take the SAT, an exam that most colleges and universities use when making admissions decisions. The percentage of Connecticut students who take the test in this format is more than double the national average and has more than doubled over the past 10 years.

Number of SAT tests taken under "nonstandard conditions"

	'87	'88	'89	'90	'91	'92	'93	'94	'95	'96	'97
Connecticut	487	545	532	636	665	736	869	1,010	1,084	1,285	1,290
Percentage	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	4	4	5	5
NATIONWIDE	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2

(Percentage of SAT tests taken under "nonstandard conditions"

SOURCE: The College Board

[Whereupon, at 12:20 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]

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